

The Sayings of the Desert Fathers

THE ALPHABETICAL COLLECTION

Translated by Benedicta Ward SLG

Foreword by Metropolitan Anthony

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Dedicated to

GILBERT SHULDHAM SHAW
(1883-1967)
MOTHER MARY CLARE S.L.G.

*'Quales ipsi extiterunt lime iustitiae
sanctique dogmatis praedictione plurimos
tales efficerunt eorum doctrina hactenus
rutilat ac resulget ecclesia ut sol et luna'*

(De Vita Masonae, XIV, 7)

FOREWORD

The Sayings of the Desert Fathers has been for centuries an inspiration to those Christians who strove for an uncompromising obedience to the word and to the spirit of the Gospel; yet the modern reader, used to an intellectual, discursive way of exposition and also to greater emotional effusions in mystical literature may find this direct challenge difficult to face and even more difficult to assimilate and to apply to everyday life. This prompts me to give here a few explanations and to try to bring out some of the features which seem to me essential in the attitude to life of these giants of the spirit.

The first thing that strikes a reader is the insistence in the stress laid on the ascetic endeavour. Modern man seeks mainly for 'experience'—putting himself at the centre of things he wishes to make them subservient to this aim; too often, even God becomes the source from which the highest experience flows, instead of being Him Whom we adore, worship, and are prepared to serve, whatever the cost to us. Such an attitude was unknown to the Desert, moreover, the Desert repudiated it as sacrilegious: the experiential knowledge which God in His infinite Love and condescension gives to those who seek Him with their whole heart is always a gift; its essential, abiding quality is its gratuity: it is an act of Divine Love and cannot therefore be deserved. The first Beatitude stands at the threshold of the Kingdom of God: 'Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of God'—blessed are those who have understood that they are nothing in themselves, possess nothing which they dare call 'their own'. If they are 'something' it is because they are loved of God and because they know for certain that their worth in God's eyes can be measured by the humiliation of the Son of God, His life, the Agony of the Garden, the dereliction of the Cross—the Blood of Christ. To be, to be possessed of the gift of life and to be granted all that makes its richness means to be loved by God; and those who know this, free from any delusion that they can exist or possess apart from this mystery of love have entered into the Kingdom of God which is the Kingdom of Love. What then shall be their response to this generous, self-effacing, sacrificial Love? An endeavour to respond to love for love, as there is no other way of acknowledging love. And this response is the ascetic endeavour, which can be summed up in the words of the Lord Jesus Christ: 'Renounce yourself, take up your Cross and follow Me'. To recognize one's own nonentity and discover the secret of the

Kingdom is not enough: the King of Love must be enthroned in our mind and heart, take undivided possession of our will and make of our very bodies the Temples of the Holy Ghost. This small particle of the Cosmos, which is our soul and body must be conquered, freed by a lifelong struggle from enslavement to the world and to the devil, freed as if it were an occupied country and restored to its legitimate King. 'Render unto Cesar that which is Cesar's and to God that which is God's': the coins of the earthly kings bear their mark, Man bears the imprint of God's Image. He belongs to Him solely and totally; and nothing, no effort, no sacrifice is too great to render to God what is His. This is the very basis of an ascetic understanding of life.

Yet many will be surprised by the insistence of the Sayings on what seem to be incredible feats of physical endurance. Are these at the centre of a spiritual life? Why not tell us more about the secret, inner life of these men and women? Because the life of the Spirit cannot be conveyed, except in images and analogies which are deceptive: those who know do not need them, and those who do not know are only led by them to partake imaginatively, but not really, in a world which to many is still out of reach. Man can live either by the Word of God or by deriving his precarious existence from the earth, which ultimately will claim back what is its own; the more one is rooted in God, the less one depends on the transitory gifts of the earth. To describe to what degree the dwellers of the Desert were free from our usual necessities is the only way we possess to convey both how perfectly rooted they were in the life-giving realm of God, and also how different the world of the Spirit is from what we imagine it to be when we confuse the highest achievements of the psyche with the life which God the Holy Spirit pours into the soul and body of the faithful; 'among those born of women there has risen no one greater than John the Baptist, yet he who is least in the Kingdom of Heaven is greater than he'.

The men and women of whom the Sayings speak were Christians who received the challenge of the Gospel with all earnestness and wanted to respond to it uncompromisingly, as generously as God, with their whole selves. Some built their whole life on one Word of the Gospel, some on one glimpse of Eternity seen in the eyes, the behaviour, the whole personality of an Elder. Men of high rank in the world and of high culture came to monks without any worldly knowledge because 'they knew not the first letters of the book of Wisdom which the others possessed'.

We have a great deal to learn from their integrity and their unrelenting courage, from their vision of God—so Holy, so great, possessed of such a love, that nothing less than one's whole being could respond to it. These were men

and women who had reached a humility of which we have no idea, because it is not rooted in an hypocritical or contrived depreciation of self, but in the vision of God, and a humbling experience of being so loved. They were ascetics, ruthless to themselves, yet so human, so immensely compassionate not only to the needs of men but also to their frailty and their sins; men and women wrapped in a depth of inner silence of which we have no idea and who taught by 'Being', not by speech: 'If a man cannot understand my silence, he will never understand my words.' If we wish to understand the sayings of the Fathers, let us approach them with veneration, silencing our judgments and our own thoughts in order to meet them on their own ground and perhaps to partake ultimately—if we prove able to emulate their earnestness in the search, their ruthless determination, their infinite compassion—in their own silent communion with God.

Anthony of Sourzib

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TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

The text of the *Apophthegmata Patrum* presents a complicated problem among patristic texts. It is a literature that grew up in the fourth century among the monks in the deserts of Egypt, Syria and Palestine, first in oral form, then in written memorials of the tradition, in Coptic, Syriac and Greek, and later in Latin. The words and deeds of the pioneers of monasticism and of other celebrated spiritual teachers were recorded for the edification of later generations of monks. Since it was spiritual value that was the criteria, sayings were included from any time or place, from the great St. Anthony to the abbots of the sixth century. The literature thus formed is a genre of its own, and one which defies precise dating. The Sayings were more than words of advice or instruction; they were words given by a spiritual father to his sons as life-giving words that would bring them to salvation. They were remembered and passed on, other words were attached to them, they were attributed to different fathers and given a new context. Copyists did not regard themselves as bound to transfer any written material that they had without change; they rearranged and edited their material. Each monastery or group of monks evolved its own *Gerontikon* often around a nucleus of Sayings of their founder or some other monk especially remembered there. Anonymous sayings were recorded as well as those associated with specific men, and there was cross-fertilization. The preface given here to the Alphabetical Series shows this process at work in one case: a monk collected material from various sources and rearranged it in alphabetical order of the names of the fathers to whom the sayings were attributed. He says he had added some anonymous sayings at the end, either of each section or of the whole collection, it is not quite clear which is meant. Another preface to a different collection, printed by P. Guy in *Recherches sur la Tradition Grecque des Apophthegmata Patrum* (p.8.) from a colophon of an eleventh-century manuscript (Paris, Fonds Grec, 1598) written about 1071-2 shows how this was done in another situation:

Since the Paterikon of our monastary of the holy father Saint Saba was getting very old, my holy fathers talked to me about him, insignificant though I am. For his soul's salvation, our most esteemed lord abbot, Johanikos, also committed to writing an account of his death. I therefore undertook this work as follows: I gathered together the Paterikons of

other monasteries and examined them to the best of my ability; I arranged them in alphabetical order making them into two books, twelve letters in one and twelve letters in the other.

You who use this book, pray for our lord and master, the most devout monk the lord Johanikos, for it was through his diligence and initiative that this was accomplished. Year 6,580 from the creation of the world, in the 10th induction.

Pray also for me, John the monk and elder, who wrote it. Glory to God. Amen.

In both cases, the copyists were also editors. This freedom to improve and re-arrange material adds to the difficulty of tracing the sources of any of the Sayings. It is an essentially fluid and changing tradition.

The *Alphabetical Collection* seems to have been rearranged in its present form at the end of the sixth century, though the earliest Sayings it contains come from the early fourth century. The compiler may also be responsible for a collection of anonymous Sayings, which have become known as the *Anonymous Collection*. Among the many other collections, the most famous in the West is the *Systematic Collection* where the Sayings have been grouped according to subject, in the Latin translation of Pelagius and John, this was known in the Middle Ages as the *Verba Seniorum*.

The text translated here is that of the *Greek Alphabetical Series*, printed in Migne's *Patrologia Graeca*, vol.65, col. 71-440. It was transcribed by Cotelerius from a twelfth-century manuscript, MS Paris Gr.1599. There is no doubt that the text is imperfect and needs re-editing. A reconsideration of various texts of the *Apophthegmata* is being undertaken by P. Guy and others, and it is hoped that a more reliable text will be produced; P. Guy has already discussed the problems involved in this matter in *Recherches sur la Tradition Grecque des Apophthegmata Patrum*. In this book, he gives the text of some other Sayings which certainly belong to this collection, and these have been translated here with the Migne text. Where the text is obviously corrupt and therefore meaningless, I have tried to make sense of the Saying, without giving alternative translations. It has seemed right to make available in English the most complete text of *Apophthegmata* that is to hand, but this has given certain limitations to its value.

At the beginning of the Sayings attributed to each of the Fathers, notes have been given where possible to suggest an identification: these are of course tentative, and claim to be no more than a suggestion in many cases. The names used were very common in the desert and there is often no way, for instance, of being sure which of the many 'Johns' is meant. Nor is it certain

that where a Father can be identified, the Sayings attributed to him were really his; with the two Macarii, for instance, there is certainly some confusion. It would be rash, therefore, to deduce too much about a Father from the Sayings under his name; but where there is other evidence about them, in the *Lausiac History*, the *History of the Monks of Egypt*, Cassian or Sozomen, this has been used. A brief chronological table had also been included, to make clear the background of the Sayings. The work of identifying both monks and monasteries has been taken some way by H. Evelyn White and Derwas Chitty; the maps used as end papers owe much to their research.

One index has been prepared by subject, and another index shows the relationship between the *Alphabetical* and *Systematic Series*. For this, I am indebted to Sister Mary SLG and Sister Christine SLG who prepared these indices, and to P. Régnauld OSB of Solesmes, who is preparing a complete index of *Apophthegmata* and has generously offered us his help and advice. A short glossary is included to explain technical terms wherever there is no exact English equivalent, and for this I am grateful to Dr. Kallistos Ware, for his help in connecting this with his forthcoming translation of the *Philokalia*, wherever similar terms are involved.

In preparing this translation I am conscious of my very great dependence on other people: my own sisters, most of all, for their patience and help within the monastic life of prayer which is the setting of this book. I am especially grateful to Sister Helen Mary SLG and Sr Agnes SLG for their help with the text, as well as to my invaluable collaborator and critic, Sister Mary SLG. Sister Margaret Clare OHP has typed the whole and provided the maps, and has given constant encouragement by her enthusiasm for and understanding of this genre. Among scholars, I also owe a special debt of gratitude to Mr. Peter Brown for his generous criticism and advice.

The dedication of this book to Gilbert Shaw and Mother Mary Clare SLG expresses a debt which must be felt not only by myself but by the whole church to a modern *abba* and *amma*, who have done so much to restore the dimension of the hermit life today.

To this I add a personal note of gratitude to Archbishop Anthony, who both inspired and moulded the work and provided the introduction out of his own wealth of experience within this tradition.

With such a 'cloud of witnesses' this book should be better than it is and its defects must be laid upon my own shortcomings and limitations.

Oxford 1975

Benedicta Ward, S.L.G.

GLOSSARY

ACCIDIE: despondency, depression, listlessness, a distaste for life without any specific reason.

AGAPE: the primary meaning is 'love'. In the *Apophthegmata* it is also used to mean the meal taken in common after the celebration of the Liturgy. The Agape can, however, also refer to the Liturgy itself. It is also used in these writings to mean a love-gift, or a loan.

APATHEIA: the state of being unmoved by passion; this involves control of the passions rather than their destruction.

APOPHTHEGM: the memorable saying of an 'old man'. 'Give me a word' is a key phrase in the desert tradition. The 'word' is not an explanation or a consoling suggestion; it is a word given in order to create life and bring the one who receives it to God and salvation. It is a word that is truly life-giving if it is not discussed or argued over, but simply received and integrated into life. These Apophthegms were always given to individuals to fit their own needs and circumstances and this should be remembered when using a collection such as this.

CELL: a hut or cave where the monk lives alone or with a disciple. These buildings were scattered about the desert out of earshot of each other. A group of such cells is called a lavra.

CENOBIUM: a monastery where monks or nuns live the common life.

HESYCHIA: Stillness, quiet, tranquillity. This is the central consideration in the prayer of the desert fathers. On the external level it signifies an individual living as a solitary; on a deeper level it is not merely separation from noise and speaking with other people, but the possession of interior quiet and peace. Thus it is possible to use the term of many who do not actually live the hermit life. It means more specifically guarding the mind, constant remembrance of God, and the possession of inner prayer. Hesychasm is the general term and hesychast is the noun used to describe the person seeking to follow this way of prayer.

METANOIA: repentance, interior sorrow for sin. It also means the action by which such sorrow is expressed, usually a prostration. It is also used of

a deep bow which is a means of greeting someone with respect. It has in later writings the meaning of conversion of life, and particularly the conversion of monastic life.

MELOTE: Sheep-skin. A monastic cloak made of sheep-skin, also used as a blanket for the monk to sleep on. It could be used for carrying a monk's few possessions.

OLD MAN: *Geron* in Greek, *Pater* in Latin (hence '*gerontikon*' or '*paterikon*' for collections of the Sayings of Old Men). It is the name given to monks who are recognized as being spiritually gifted.

SYNAXIS: the liturgical office said by monks in common, usually on Saturday and Sunday. It is also used here of the individual rule of prayer which a solitary follows.

WORK: used in the *Apophthegmata* in two senses: either as manual labour, or as spiritual exertion. These two are seen as one, but the idea of interior 'work' predominates for the monk.

PROLOGUE

This book is an account of the virtuous asceticism and admirable way of life and also of the words of the holy and blessed fathers. They are meant to inspire and instruct those who want to imitate their heavenly lives, so that they may make progress on the way that leads to the kingdom of heaven. You must understand that the holy fathers who were the initiators and masters of the blessed monastic way of life, being entirely on fire with divine and heavenly love and counting as nothing all that men hold to be beautiful and estimable, trained themselves here below to do nothing whatever out of vainglory. They hid themselves away, and by their supreme humility in keeping most of their good works hidden, they made progress on the way that leads to God.

Moreover, no-one has been able to describe their virtuous lives for us in detail, for those who have taken the greatest pains in this matter have only committed to writing a few fragments of their best words and actions. They did not do this to gain praise from men, but only to stir up future generations to emulate them. Thus there were many who have set down the words and deeds of the holy old men at various times in the way they told them, with simple and unstudied words. They had only one aim—to profit many.

Now, a narrative which is the work of many hands is confused and disorderly, and it distracts the attention of the readers, for their minds are drawn in different directions and cannot retain sayings that are scattered about in the book. Therefore we have tried to gather them together in chapters, so that they will be in order and clear and easy to look up, for those who want to benefit by reading them. Thus, all that is attributed to Anthony, Arsenius, Agathon, and all those whose names begin with 'A' are listed under Alpha; Basil, Bessarion, Benjamin, under Beta, and so on to the end of the alphabet.

But since there are also some sayings and deeds of the holy fathers in which the name of him who said or did them does not appear, we have arranged them in chapters after the alphabetical sections.

We have investigated and gone through as many books as we could find, and we have placed the results at the end of the book, so that we may gather spiritual fruit from each one, and delighting in the words of the fathers which are sweeter than honey and the honeycomb (Ps. 19.10) let us live according to the vocation the Lord has given us and so gain His kingdom. Amen.

ALPHA

ANTHONY the GREAT

Anthony the Great, called 'The Father of Monks', was born in central Egypt about A.D. 251, the son of peasant farmers who were Christian. In c. 269 he heard the Gospel read in church and applied to himself the words: 'Go, sell all that you have and give to the poor and come...'. He devoted himself to a life of asceticism under the guidance of a recluse near his village. In c. 285 he went alone into the desert to live in complete solitude. His reputation attracted followers, who settled near him, and in c. 305 he came out of his hermitage in order to act as their spiritual father. Five years later he again retired into solitude. He visited Alexandria at least twice, once during the persecution of Christians and again to support the Bishop Athanasius against heresy. He died at the age of one hundred and five. His life was written by Saint Athanasius and was very influential in spreading the ideals of monasticism throughout the Christian World.

1. When the holy Abba Anthony lived in the desert he was beset by *accidie*, and attacked by many sinful thoughts. He said to God, 'Lord, I want to be saved but these thoughts do not leave me alone; what shall I do in my affliction? How can I be saved?' A short while afterwards, when he got up to go out, Anthony saw a man like himself sitting at his work, getting up from his work to pray, then sitting down and plaiting a rope, then getting up again to pray. It was an angel of the Lord sent to correct and reassure him. He heard the angel saying to him, 'Do this and you will be saved.' At these words, Anthony was filled with joy and courage. He did this, and he was saved.

2. When the same Abba Anthony thought about the depth of the judgments of God, he asked, 'Lord, how is it that some die when they are young, while others drag on to extreme old age? Why are there those who are poor and those who are rich? Why do wicked men prosper and why are the just in need?' He heard a voice answering him, 'Anthony, keep your attention on yourself; these things are according to the judgement of God, and it is not to your advantage to know anything about them.'

3. Someone asked Abba Anthony, 'What must one do in order to please God?' The old man replied, 'Pay attention to what I tell you: whoever you may be, always have God before your eyes; whatever you do, do it according to the testimony of the holy Scriptures; in whatever place you live, do not easily leave it. Keep these three precepts and you will be saved.'

4. Abba Anthony said to Abba Poemen, 'This is the great work of a man: always to take the blame for his own sins before God and to expect temptation to his last breath.'

5. He also said, 'Whoever has not experienced temptation cannot enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.' He even added, 'Without temptations no-one can be saved.'

6. Abba Pambo asked Abba Anthony, 'What ought I to do?' and the old man said to him, 'Do not trust in your own righteousness, do not worry about the past, but control your tongue and your stomach.'

7. Abba Anthony said, 'I saw all the snares that the enemy spreads out over the world and I said groaning, What can get through from such snares?' Then I heard a voice saying to me, 'Humility.'

8. He also said, 'Some have afflicted their bodies by asceticism, but they lack discernment, and so they are far from God.'

9. He also said, 'Our life and our death is with our neighbour. If we gain our brother, we have gained God, but if we scandalise our brother, we have sinned against Christ.'

10. He said also, 'Just as fish die if they stay too long out of water, so the monks who loiter outside their cells or pass their time with men of the world lose the intensity of inner peace. So like a fish going towards the sea, we must hurry to reach our cell, for fear that if we delay outside we will lose our interior watchfulness.'

11. He said also, 'He who wishes to live in solitude in the desert is delivered from three conflicts: hearing, speech, and sight; there is only one conflict for him and that is with fornication.'

12. Some brothers came to find Abba Anthony to tell him about the visions they were having, and to find out from him if they were true or if they came from the demons. They had a donkey which died on the way. When they reached the place where the old man was, he said to them before they could ask him anything, 'How was it that the little donkey died on the way here?' They said, 'How do you know about that, Father?' And he told them, 'The demons shewed me what happened.' So they said, 'That was what we came

to question you about, for fear we were being deceived, for we have visions which often turn out to be true.' Thus the old man convinced them, by the example of the donkey, that their visions came from the demons.

13. A hunter in the desert saw Abba Anthony enjoying himself with the brethren and he was shocked. Wanting to show him that it was necessary sometimes to meet the needs of the brethren, the old man said to him, 'Put an arrow in your bow and shoot it.' So he did. The old man then said, 'Shoot another,' and he did so. Then the old man said, 'Shoot yet again,' and the hunter replied 'If I bend my bow so much I will break it.' Then the old man said to him, 'It is the same with the work of God. If we stretch the brethren beyond measure they will soon break. Sometimes it is necessary to come down to meet their needs.' When he heard these words the hunter was pierced by compunction and, greatly edified by the old man, he went away. As for the brethren, they went home strengthened.

14. Abba Anthony heard of a very young monk who had performed a miracle on the road. Seeing the old men walking with difficulty along the road, he ordered the wild asses to come and carry them until they reached Abba Anthony. Those whom they had carried told Abba Anthony about it. He said to them, 'This monk seems to me to be a ship loaded with goods but I do not know if he will reach harbour.' After a while, Anthony suddenly began to weep, to tear his hair and lament. His disciples said to him, 'Why are you weeping, Father?' and the old man replied, 'A great pillar of the Church has just fallen (he meant the young monk) but go to him and see what has happened.' So the disciples went and found the monk sitting on a mat and weeping for the sin he had committed. Seeing the disciples of the old man he said, 'Tell the old man to pray that God will give me just ten days and I hope I will have made satisfaction.' But in the space of five days he died.

15. The brothers praised a monk before Abba Anthony. When the monk came to see him, Anthony wanted to know how he would bear insults; and seeing that he could not bear them at all, he said to him, 'You are like a village magnificently decorated on the outside, but destroyed from within by robbers.'

16. A brother said to Abba Anthony, 'Pray for me.' The old man said to him, 'I will have no mercy upon you, nor will God have any, if you yourself do not make an effort and if you do not pray to God.'

17. One day some old men came to see Abba Anthony. In the midst of them was Abba Joseph. Wanting to test them, the old man suggested a text

from the Scriptures, and, beginning with the youngest, he asked them what it meant. Each gave his opinion as he was able. But to each one the old man said, 'You have not understood it.' Last of all he said to Abba Joseph, 'How would you explain this saying?' and he replied, 'I do not know.' Then Abba Anthony said, 'Indeed, Abba Joseph has found the way, for he has said: "I do not know."'

18. Some brothers were coming from Scetis to see Abba Anthony. When they were getting into a boat to go there, they found an old man who also wanted to go there. The brothers did not know him. They sat in the boat, occupied by turns with the words of the Fathers, Scripture and their manual work. As for the old man, he remained silent. When they arrived on shore they found that the old man was going to the cell of Abba Anthony too. When they reached the place, Anthony said to them, 'You found this old man a good companion for the journey?' Then he said to the old man, 'You have brought many good brethren with you, father.' The old man said, 'No doubt they are good, but they do not have a door to their house and anyone who wishes can enter the stable and loose the ass.' He meant that the brethren said whatever came into their mouths.

19. The brethren came to the Abba Anthony and said to him, 'Speak a word; how are we to be saved?' The old man said to them, 'You have heard the Scriptures. That should teach you how.' But they said, 'We want to hear from you too, Father.' Then the old man said to them, 'The Gospel says, "if anyone strikes you on one cheek, turn to him the other also." (Matt. 5.39) They said, 'We cannot do that.' The old man said, 'If you cannot offer the other cheek, at least allow one cheek to be struck.' 'We cannot do that either,' they said. So he said, 'If you are not able to do that, do not return evil for evil,' and they said, 'We cannot do that either.' Then the old man said to his disciple, 'Prepare a little brew of corn for these invalids. If you cannot do this, or that, what can I do for you? What you need is prayers.'

20. A brother renounced the world and gave his goods to the poor, but he kept back a little for his personal expenses. He went to see Abba Anthony. When he told him this, the old man said to him, 'If you want to be a monk, go into the village, buy some meat, cover your naked body with it and come here like that.' The brother did so, and the dogs and birds tore at his flesh. When he came back the old man asked him whether he had followed his advice. He showed him his wounded body, and Saint Anthony said, 'Those who renounce the world but want to keep something for themselves are torn in this way by the demons who make war on them.'

21. It happened one day that one of the brethren in the monastery of Abba

Elias was tempted. Cast out of the monastery, he went over the mountain to Abba Anthony. The brother lived near him for a while and then Anthony sent him back to the monastery from which he had been expelled. When the brothers saw him they cast him out yet again, and he went back to Abba Anthony saying, 'My Father, they will not receive me.' Then the old man sent them a message saying, 'A boat was ship-wrecked at sea and lost its cargo; with great difficulty it reached the shore; but you want to throw into the sea that which has found a safe harbour on the shore.' When the brothers understood that it was Abba Anthony who had sent them this monk, they received him at once.

22. Abba Anthony said, 'I believe that the body possesses a natural movement, to which it is adapted, but which it cannot follow without the consent of the soul; it only signifies in the body a movement without passion. There is another movement, which comes from the nourishment and warming of the body by eating and drinking, and this causes the heat of the blood to stir up the body to work. That is why the apostle said, "Do not get drunk with wine for that is debauchery" (Ephes. 5.18). And in the Gosepl the Lord also recommends this to his disciples: "Take heed to yourselves lest your hearts be weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness" (Luke 21.34). But there is yet another movement which afflicts those who fight, and that comes from the wiles and jealousy of the demons. You must understand what these three bodily movements are: one is natural, one comes from too much to eat, the third is caused by the demons.'

23. He also said, 'God does not allow the same warfare and temptations to this generation as he did formerly, for men are weaker now and cannot bear so much.'

24. It was revealed to Abba Anthony in his desert that there was one who was his equal in the city. He was a doctor by profession and whatever he had beyond his needs he gave to the poor, and every day he sang the Sanctus with the angels.

25. Abba Anthony said, 'A time is coming when men will go mad, and when they see someone who is not mad, they will attack him saying, "You are mad, you are not like us."

26. The brethren came to Abba Anthony and laid before him a passage from Leviticus. The old man went out into the desert, secretly followed by Abba Ammonias, who knew that this was his custom. Abba Anthony went a long way off and stood there praying, crying in a loud voice, 'God, send Moses, to make me understand this saying.' Then there came a voice

speaking with him. Abba Ammonias said that although he heard the voice speaking with him, he could not understand what it said.

27. Three Fathers used to go and visit blessed Anthony every year and two of them used to discuss their thoughts and the salvation of their souls with him, but the third always remained silent and did not ask him anything. After a long time, Abba Anthony said to him, 'You often come here to see me, but you never ask me anything,' and the other replied, 'It is enough for me to see you, Father.'

28. They said that a certain old man asked God to let him see the Fathers and he saw them all except Abba Anthony. So he asked his guide, 'Where is Abba Anthony?' He told him in reply that in the place where God is, there Anthony would be.

29. A brother in a monastery was falsely accused of fornication and he arose and went to Abba Anthony. The brethren also came from the monastery to correct him and bring him back. They set about proving that he had done this thing, but he defended himself and denied that he had done anything of the kind. Now Abba Paphnutius, who is called Cephalos, happened to be there, and he told them this parable: 'I have seen a man on the bank of the river buried up to his knees in mud and some men came to give him a hand to help him out, but they pushed him further in up to his neck.' Then Abba Anthony said this about Abba Paphnutius: 'Here is a real man, who can care for souls and save them.' All those present were pierced to the heart by the words of the old man and they asked forgiveness of the brother. So, admonished by the Fathers, they took the brother back to the monastery.

30. Some say of Saint Anthony that he was 'Spirit-borne', that is, carried along by the Holy Spirit, but he would never speak of this to men. Such men see what is happening in the world, as well as knowing what is going to happen.

31. One day Abba Anthony received a letter from the Emperor Constantius, asking him to come to Constantinople and he wondered whether he ought to go. So he said to Abba Paul, his disciple, 'Ought I to go?' He replied, 'If you go, you will be called Anthony; but if you stay here, you will be called Abba Anthony.'

32. Abba Anthony said, 'I no longer fear God, but I love Him. For love casts out fear.' (John IV, 18).

33. He also said, 'Always have the fear of God before your eyes. Remember him who gives death and life. Hate the world and all that is in it. Hate all peace that comes from the flesh. Renounce this life, so that you may be alive

to God. Remember what you have promised God, for it will be required of you on the day of judgement. Suffer hunger, thirst, nakedness, be watchful and sorrowful; weep, and groan in your heart; test yourselves, to see if you are worthy of God; despise the flesh, so that you may preserve your souls.'

34. Abba Anthony once went to visit Abba Amoun in Mount Nitria and when they met, Abba Amoun said, 'By your prayers, the number of the brethren increases, and some of them want to build more cells where they may live in peace. How far away from here do you think we should build the cells?' Abba Anthony said, 'Let us eat at the ninth hour and then let us go out for a walk in the desert and explore the country.' So they went out into the desert and they walked until sunset and then Abba Anthony said, 'Let us pray and plant the cross here, so that those who wish to do so may build here. Then when those who remain there want to visit those who have come here, they can take a little food at the ninth hour and then come. If they do this, they will be able to keep in touch with each other without distraction of mind.' The distance is twelve miles.

35. Abba Anthony said, 'Whoever hammers a lump of iron, first decides what he is going to make of it, a scythe, a sword, or an axe. Even so we ought to make up our minds what kind of virtue we want to forge or we labour in vain.'

36. He also said, 'Obedience with abstinence gives men power over wild beasts.'

37. He also said, 'Nine monks fell away after many labours and were obsessed with spiritual pride, for they put their trust in their own works and being deceived they did not give due heed to the commandment that says, "Ask your father and he will tell you." (Deut. 32.7)

38. And he said this, 'If he is able to, a monk ought to tell his elders confidently how many steps he takes and how many drops of water he drinks in his cell, in case he is in error about it.'

ARSENIUS

Arsenius was born in Rome about 360. A well-educated man, of senatorial rank, he was appointed by the Emperor Theodosius I as tutor to the princes Arcadius and Honorius. He left the palace in 394 and sailed secretly to Alexandria. From there he went to Scetis and placed himself under the guidance of Abba John the Dwarf. He became an anchorite near Petra in Scetis. He seems to have had only three disciples, Alexander, Zoilus and

Daniel. He was renowned for his austerity and silence and this combined with his learning made him seem somewhat forbidding to the Coptic monks. After the second devastation of Scetis in 434 he went to the mountain of Troë where he died in 440.

1. While still living in the palace, Abba Arsenius prayed to God in these words, 'Lord, lead me in the way of salvation.' And a voice came saying to him, 'Arsenius, flee from men and you will be saved.'

2. Having withdrawn to the solitary life he made the same prayer again and he heard a voice saying to him, 'Arsenius, flee, be silent, pray always, for these are the source of sinlessness.'

3. It happened that when Abba Arsenius was sitting in his cell that he was harassed by demons. His servants, on their return, stood outside his cell and heard him praying to God in these words, 'O God, do not leave me. I have done nothing good in Your sight, but according to Your goodness, let me now make a beginning of good.'

4. It was said of him that, just as none in the palace had worn more splendid garments than he when he lived there, so no-one in the Church wore such poor clothing.

5. Someone said to blessed Arsenius, 'How is it that we, with all our education and our wide knowledge get nowhere, while these Egyptian peasants acquire so many virtues?' Abba Arsenius said to him, 'We indeed get nothing from our secular education, but these Egyptian peasants acquire the virtues by hard work.'

6. One day Abba Arsenius consulted an old Egyptian monk about his own thoughts. Someone noticed this and said to him, 'Abba Arsenius, how is it that you with such a good Latin and Greek education, ask this peasant about your thoughts?' He replied, 'I have indeed been taught Latin and Greek, but I do not know even the alphabet of this peasant.'

7. Blessed Archbishop Theophilus, accompanied by a magistrate, came one day to find Abba Arsenius. He questioned the old man, to hear a word from him. After a short silence the old man answered him, 'Will you put into practice what I say to you?' They promised him this. 'If you hear Arsenius is anywhere, do not go there.'

8. Another time the Archbishop, intending to come to see him, sent someone to see if the old man would receive him. Arsenius told him, 'If you come, I shall receive you; but if I receive you, I receive everyone and therefore I shall no longer live here.' Hearing that, the Archbishop said, 'If I drive him away by going to him, I shall not go any more.'

9. A brother questioned Abba Arsenius to hear a word of him and the old man said to him, 'Strive with all your might to bring your interior activity into accord with God, and you will overcome exterior passions.'

10. He also said, 'If we seek God, he will shew himself to us, and if we keep him, He will remain close to us.'

11. Someone said to Abba Arsenius, 'My thoughts trouble me, saying, "You can neither fast nor work at least go and visit the sick, for that is also charity." But the old man, recognising the suggestions of the demons, said to him, 'Go, eat, drink, sleep, do no work, only do not leave your cell.' For he knew that steadfastness in the cell keeps a monk in the right way.

12. Abba Arsenius used to say that a monk travelling abroad should not get involved in anything; thus he will remain in peace.

13. Abba Mark said to Abba Arsenius, 'Why do you avoid us?' The old man said to him, 'God knows that I love you, but I cannot live with God and with men. The thousands and ten thousands of the heavenly hosts have but one will, while men have many. So I cannot leave God to be with men.'

14. Abba Daniel said of Abba Arsenius that he used to pass the whole night without sleeping, and in the early morning when nature compelled him to go to sleep, he would say to sleep, 'Come here, wicked servant.' Then, seated, he would snatch a little sleep and soon wake up again.

15. Abba Arsenius used to say that one hour's sleep is enough for a monk if he is a good fighter.

16. The old man used to tell how one day someone handed round a few dried figs in Scetis. Because they were not worth anything, no-one took any to Abba Arsenius in order not to offend him. Learning of it, the old man did not come to the *synaxis* saying, 'You have cast me out by not giving me a share of the blessing which God had given the brethren and which I was not worthy to receive.' Everyone heard of this and was edified at the old man's humility. Then the priest went to take him the small dried figs and brought him to the *synaxis* with joy.

17. Abba Daniel used to say, 'He lived with us many a long year and every year we used to take him only one basket of bread and when we went to find him the next year we would eat some of that bread.'

18. It was said of the same Abba Arsenius that he only changed the water for his palm leaves once a year; the rest of the time he simply added to it. One old man implored him in these words, 'Why do you not change the water for these palm leaves when it smells bad?' He said to him, 'Instead of

the perfumes and aromatics which I used in the world I must bear this bad smell.'

19. Abba Daniel used to tell how when Abba Arsenius learned that all the varieties of fruit were ripe he would say, 'Bring me some.' He would taste a very little of each, just once, giving thanks to God.

20. Once at Scetis Abba Arsenius was ill and he was without even a scrap of linen. As he had nothing with which to buy any, he received some through another's charity and he said, 'I give Thee thanks, Lord, for having considered me worthy to receive this charity in Thy name.'

21. It was said of him that his cell was thirty-two miles away and that he did not readily leave it: that in fact others did his errands. When Scetis was destroyed he left weeping and said, 'The world has lost Rome and the monks have lost Scetis.'

22. Abba Mark asked Abba Arsenius, 'Is it good to have nothing extra in the cell? I know a brother who had some vegetables and he has pulled them up.' Abba Arsenius replied, 'Undoubtedly that is good but it must be done according to a man's capacity. For if he does not have the strength for such a practice he will soon plant others.'

23. Abba Daniel, the disciple of Abba Arsenius, related this: 'One day I found myself close to Abba Alexander and he was full of sorrow. He lay down and stared up into the air because of his sorrow. Now it happened that the blessed Arsenius came to speak with him and saw him lying down. During their conversation he said to him, 'And who was the layman whom I saw here?' Abba Alexander said, 'Where did you see him?' He said, 'As I was coming down the mountain I cast my eyes in this direction towards the cave and I saw a man stretched full length looking up into the air.' So Abba Alexander did penance, saying, 'Forgive me, it was I; I was overcome by sorrow.' The old man said to him, 'Well now, so it was you? Good; I thought it was a layman and that was why I asked you.'

24. Another time Abba Arsenius said to Abba Alexander, 'When you have cut your palm leaves, come and eat with me, but if visitors come, eat with them.' Now Abba Alexander worked slowly and carefully. When the time came, he had not finished the palm leaves and wishing to follow the old man's instructions, he waited until he had finished them. When Abba Arsenius saw that he was late, he ate, thinking that he had had guests. But Abba Alexander, when at last he had finished, came away. And the old man said to him, 'Have you had visitors?' 'No,' he said. 'Then why did you not come?' The other replied, 'You told me to come when I had cut the

palm leaves; and following your instructions, I did not come, because I had not finished.' The old man marvelled at his exactitude and said to him, 'Break your fast at once so as to celebrate the *synaxis* untroubled, and drink some water, otherwise your body will soon suffer.'

25. One day Abba Arsenius came to a place where there were reeds blowing in the wind. The old man said to the brothers, 'What is this movement?' They said, 'Some reeds.' Then the old man said to them, 'When one who is living in silent prayer hears the song of a little sparrow, his heart no longer experiences the same peace. How much worse it is when you hear the movement of those reeds.'

26. Abba Daniel said that some brothers proposing to go to the Thebaid to find some flax said, 'Let us also take the opportunity to see Abba Arsenius.' So Abba Alexander came to tell the old man, 'Some brothers who have come from Alexandria wish to see you.' The old man answered, 'Ask them why they have come.' Having learned that they were going to the Thebaid to look for flax, he reported this to the old man, who said, 'They will certainly not see the face of Arsenius for they have not come on my account but because of their work. Make them rest and send them away in peace and tell them the old man cannot receive them.'

27. A brother came to the cell of Abba Arsenius at Scetis. Waiting outside the door he saw the old man entirely like a flame. (The brother was worthy of this sight.) When he knocked, the old man came out and saw the brother marvelling. He said to him, 'Have you been knocking long? Did you see anything here?' The other answered, 'No.' So then he talked with him and sent him away.

28. When Abba Arsenius was living at Canopus, a very rich and God-fearing virgin of senatorial rank came from Rome to see him. When the Archbishop Theophilus met her, she asked him to persuade the old man to receive her. So he went to ask him to do so in these words, 'A certain person of senatorial rank has come from Rome and wishes to see you.' The old man refused to meet her. But when the archbishop told the young girl this, she ordered the beast of burden to be saddled saying, 'I trust in God that I shall see him, for it is not a man whom I have come to see (there are plenty of those in our town), but a prophet.' When she had reached the old man's cell, by a dispensation of God, he was outside it. Seeing him, she threw herself at his feet. Outraged, he lifted her up again, and said, looking steadily at her, 'If you must see my face, here it is, look.' She was covered with shame and did not look at his face. Then the old man said to her, 'Have you not heard tell of my way of life? It ought to be respected. How dare you make

such a journey? Do you not realise you are a woman and cannot go just anywhere? Or is it so that on returning to Rome you can say to other women: I have seen Arsenius? Then they will turn the sea into a thoroughfare with women coming to see me.' She said, 'May it please the Lord, I shall not let anyone come here; but pray for me and remember me always.' But he answered her, 'I pray God to remove remembrance of you from my heart.' Overcome at hearing these words, she withdrew. When she had returned to the town, in her grief she fell ill with a fever, and blessed Archbishop Theophilus was informed that she was ill. He came to see her and asked her to tell him what was the matter. She said to him, 'If only I had not gone there! For I asked the old man to remember me, he said to me, "I pray God to take the remembrance of you from my heart." So now I am dying of grief.' The archbishop said to her, 'Do you not realise that you are a woman, and that it is through women that the enemy wars against the Saints? That is the explanation of the old man's words; but as for your soul, he will pray for it continually.' At this, her spirit was healed and she returned home joyfully.

29. Abba David related this about Abba Arsenius. One day a magistrate came, bringing him the will of a senator, a member of his family who had left him a very large inheritance. Arsenius took it and was about to destroy it. But the magistrate threw himself at his feet saying, 'I beg you, do not destroy it or they will cut off my head.' Abba Arsenius said to him, 'But I was dead long before this senator who has just died,' and he returned the will to him without accepting anything.

30. It was also said of him that on Saturday evenings, preparing for the glory of Sunday, he would turn his back on the sun and stretch out his hands in prayer towards the heavens, till once again the sun shone on his face. Then he would sit down.

31. It was said of Abba Arsenius and Abba Theodore of Pherme that, more than any of the others, they hated the esteem of other men. Abba Arsenius would not readily meet people, while Abba Theodore was like steel when he met anyone.

32. In the days when Abba Arsenius was living in Lower Egypt he was continually interrupted there and so he judged it right to leave his cell. Without taking anything away with him, he went to his disciples at Pharan, Alexander and Zoilos. He said to Alexander, 'Get up, and get into the boat,' which he did. And he said to Zoilos, 'Come with me as far as the river and find me a boat which will take me to Alexandria; then embark, so as to rejoin your brother.' Zoilos was troubled by these words but he said

nothing. So they parted company. The old man went down to the regions of Alexandria where he fell seriously ill. His disciples said to each other, 'Perhaps one of us has annoyed the old man, and that is the reason why he has gone away from us?' But they found nothing with which to reprove themselves nor any disobedience. Once he was better, the old man said, 'I will return to my Fathers.' Going upstream again, he came to Petra where his disciples were. While he was close to the river, a little Ethiopian slave-girl came and touched his sheepskin. The old man rebuked her and she replied, 'If you are a monk, go to the mountain.' Alexander and Zoilos met him there. Then, when they threw themselves at his feet, the old man fell down with them also and they wept together. The old man said to them, 'Did you not hear that I was ill?' They answered, 'Yes.' 'Then,' he continued, 'why did you not come to see me?' Abba Alexander said, 'Your going from us has not been good for us, and many have not been edified by it, saying, "If they had not disobeyed the old man, he would not have left them.'" Abba Arsenius said, 'On the other hand, they will now be saying, "The dove, not finding anywhere to rest, returned to Noah in the ark.'" So they were comforted and he remained with them till his death.

33. Abba David said, 'Abba Arsenius told us the following, as though it referred to someone else, but in fact it referred to himself. An old man was sitting in his cell and a voice came to him which said, "Come, and I will show you the works of men." He got up and followed. The voice led him to a certain place and shewed him an Ethiopian cutting wood and making a great pile. He struggled to carry it but in vain. But instead of taking some off, he cut more wood which he added to the pile. He did this for a long time. Going on a little further, the old man was shown a man standing on the shore of a lake drawing up water and pouring it into a broken receptacle, so that the water ran back into the lake. Then the voice said to the old man, "Come, and I will shew you something else." He saw a temple and two men on horseback, opposite one another, carrying a piece of wood crosswise. They wanted to go in through the door but could not because they held their piece of wood crosswise. Neither of them would draw back before the other, so as to carry the wood straight; so they remained outside the door. The voice said to the old man, "These men carry the yoke of righteousness with pride, and do not humble themselves so as to correct themselves and walk in the humble way of Christ. So they remain outside the Kingdom of God. The man cutting the wood is he who lives in many sins and instead of repenting he adds more faults to his sins. He who draws the water is he who does good deeds, but mixing bad ones with them, he

spoils even his good works. So everyone must be watchful of his actions, lest he labour in vain.'

34. The same abba told of some Fathers who came one day from Alexandria to see Abba Arsenius. Amongst them was the aged Timothy, Archbishop of Alexandria, surnamed the Poor and he had one of his nephews with him. The old man was then ill and he refused to see them, for fear others would come and trouble him. In those days he was living in Petra of Troë. So they went back again, feeling annoyed. Now there was a barbarian invasion and the old man went to live in lower Egypt. Having heard this they came to see him again and he received them with joy. The brother who was with them said to him, 'Abba, don't you know that we came to see you at Troë and you did not receive us?' The old man said to him, 'You have eaten bread and drunk water, but truly, my son, I tasted neither bread nor water nor did I sit down until I thought you had reached home, to punish myself because you had been wearied through me. But forgive me, my brothers.' So they went away consoled.

35. The same abba said, 'One day Abba Arsenius called me and said, "Be a comfort to your Father, so that when he goes to the Lord, he may pray for you that the Lord may be good to you in your turn."

36. It was said of Abba Arsenius that once when he was ill at Scetis, the priest came to take him to church and put him on a bed with a small pillow under his head. Now behold an old man who was coming to see him, saw him lying on a bed with a little pillow under his head and he was shocked and said, 'Is this really Abba Arsenius, this man lying down like this?' Then the priest took him aside and said to him, 'In the village where you lived, what was your trade?' 'I was a shepherd,' he replied. 'And how did you live?' 'I had a very hard life.' Then the priest said, 'And how do you live in your cell now?' The other replied, 'I am more comfortable.' Then he said to him, 'Do you see this Abba Arsenius? When he was in the world he was the father of the emperor, surrounded by thousands of slaves with golden girdles, all wearing collars of gold and garments of silk. Beneath him were spread rich coverings. While you were in the world as a shepherd you did not enjoy even the comforts you now have but he no longer enjoys the delicate life he led in the world. So you are comforted while he is afflicted.' At these words the old man was filled with compunction and prostrated himself saying, 'Father, forgive me, for I have sinned. Truly the way this man follows is the way of truth, for it leads to humility, while mine leads to comfort.' So the old man withdrew, edified.

37. A Father went to see Abba Arsenius. When he knocked at the door

the old man opened it, thinking that it was his servant. But when he saw that it was someone else he fell on his face to the ground. The other said to him, 'Get up, Father, so that I may greet you.' But the old man replied, 'I shall not get up till you have gone,' and in spite of much pleading he did not get up until the other had gone away.

38. It was told of a brother who came to see Abba Arsenius at Scetis that, when he came to the church, he asked the clergy if he could visit Abba Arsenius. They said to him, 'Brother, have a little refreshment and then go and see him.' 'I shall not eat anything,' said he, 'till I have met him.' So, because Arsenius' cell was far away, they sent a brother with him. Having knocked on the door, they entered, greeted the old man and sat down without saying anything. Then the brother from the church said 'I will leave you. Pray for me.' Now the visiting brother, not feeling at ease with the old man, said 'I will come with you,' and they went away together. Then the visitor asked 'Take me to Abba Moses, who used to be a robber.' When they arrived the Abba welcomed them joyfully and then took leave of them with delight. The brother who had brought the other one said to his companion, 'See, I have taken you to the foreigner and to the Egyptian, which of the two do you prefer?' 'As for me,' he replied, 'I prefer the Egyptian.' Now a Father who heard this prayed to God saying, 'Lord, explain this matter to me: for Thy name's sake the one flees from men, and the other, for Thy name's sake, receives them with open arms.' Then two large boats were shown to him on a river and he saw Abba Arsenius and the Spirit of God sailing in the one, in perfect peace; and in the other was Abba Moses with the angels of God, and they were all eating honey cakes.

39. Abba Daniel said 'At the point of death, Abba Arsenius sent us this message, "Do not trouble to make offerings for me, for truly I have made an offering for myself and I shall find it again."

40. When Abba Arsenius was at the point of death, his disciples were troubled. He said to them, 'The time has not yet come; when it comes, I will tell you. But if ever you give my remains to anyone, we will be judged before the dreadful seat of judgement.' They said to him, 'What shall we do? We do not know how to bury anyone.' The old man said to them, 'Don't you know how to tie a rope to my feet and drag me to the mountain?' The old man used to say to himself: 'Arsenius, why have you left the world? I have often repented of having spoken, but never of having been silent.' When his death drew near, the brethren saw him weeping and they said to him 'Truly, Father, are you also afraid?' 'Indeed,' he answered them, 'the

fear which is mine at this hour has been with me ever since I became a monk.' Upon this he fell asleep.

41. It was said of him that he had a hollow in his chest channelled out by the tears which fell from his eyes all his life while he sat at his manual work. When Abba Poemen learned that he was dead, he said weeping, 'Truly you are blessed, Abba Arsenius, for you wept for yourself in this world! He who does not weep for himself here below will weep eternally hereafter; so it is impossible not to weep, either voluntarily or when compelled through suffering.'

42. Abba Daniel used to say this about him: 'He never wanted to reply to a question concerning the Scriptures, though he could well have done so had he wished, just as he never readily wrote a letter. When from time to time he came to church he would sit behind a pillar, so that no-one should see his face and so that he himself would not notice others. His appearance was angelic, like that of Jacob. His body was graceful and slender; his long beard reached down to his waist. Through much weeping his eye-lashes had fallen out. Tall of stature, he was bent with old age. He was ninety-five when he died. For forty years he was employed in the palace of Theodosius the Great of divine memory, who was the father of the divine Arcadios and Honorios; then he lived forty years in Scetis, ten years in Troë above Babylon, opposite Memphis and three years at Canopus of Alexandria. The last two years he returned to Troë where he died, finishing his course in peace and the fear of God. He was a good man "filled with the Holy Spirit and faith." (Acts XI, 24) He left me his leather tunic, his white hair-shirt and his palm-leaf sandals. Although unworthy, I wear them, in order to gain his blessing.'

43 Abba Daniel used to tell this also about Abba Arsenius: 'One day he called my Fathers, Abba Alexander and Abba Zoilos, and by way of humiliating himself, said to them "Since the demons attack me and I do not know if they will not rob me when I am asleep tonight, share my suffering and watch lest I fall asleep during my vigil." Late at night they sat in silence, one on his right and the other on his left. My Fathers said, "As for us, we fell asleep, then woke again, but we did not notice that he had drowsed. Early in the morning (God knows if he did it on purpose to make us believe that he had slept, or whether he had really given way to sleep) he gave three sighs, then immediately got up, saying, 'I have been to sleep, haven't I?' We replied that we did not know."

44. Some old men came one day to Abba Arsenius and insisted on seeing him. He received them. Then they asked him to say a word to them about

those who live in solitude without seeing anyone. The old man said to them, 'As long as a young girl is living in her father's house, many young men wish to marry her, but when she has taken a husband, she is no longer pleasing to everyone; despised by some, approved by others, she no longer enjoys the favour of former times, when she lived a hidden life. So it is with the soul; from the day when it is shown to everyone, it is no longer able to satisfy everyone.'

AGATHON

Agathon was a young man when he came to the Thebaid, where he was trained by Poemen. His abba thought highly of him, and Poemen 61 shews Abba Joseph expressing surprise that Poemen should call such a young disciple 'abba'. Agathon went to Scetis, where he lived for a time with Alexander and Zoilos, who were later disciples of Arsenius. He left Scetis, perhaps after the first devastation, with his disciple Abraham, and lived near the Nile, not far from Troë. He knew Amoun, Macarius, Joseph and Peter from the early days in Scetis.

1. Abba Peter, the disciple of Abba Lot, said, 'One day when I was in Abba Agathon's cell, a brother came in and said to him "I want to live with the brethren; tell me how to dwell with them." The old man answered him "All the days of your life keep the frame of mind of the stranger which you have on the first day you join them, so as not to become too familiar with them." The Abba Macarius asked "And what does this familiarity produce?" The old man replied "It is like a strong, burning wind, each time it arises everything flies swept before it, and it destroys the fruit of the trees." So Abba Macarius said, "Is speaking too freely really as bad as all that?" Abba Agathon said "No passion is worse than an uncontrolled tongue, because it is the mother of all the passions. Accordingly the good workman should not use it, even if he is living as a solitary in the cell. I know a brother who spent a long time in his cell using a small bed who said, "I should have left my cell without making use of that small bed if no-one had told me it was there." It is the hard-working monk who is a warrior.'

2. Abba Agathon said, 'Under no circumstances should the monk let his conscience accuse him of anything.'

3. He also said, 'Unless he keeps the commandments of God, a man cannot make progress, not even in a single virtue.'

4. He also said, 'I have never gone to sleep with a grievance against anyone,

and, as far as I could, I have never let anyone go to sleep with a grievance against me.'

5. It was said concerning Abba Agathon that some monks came to find him having heard tell of his great discernment. Wanting to see if he would lose his temper they said to him 'Aren't you that Agathon who is said to be a fornicator and a proud man?' 'Yes, it is very true,' he answered. They resumed, 'Aren't you that Agathon who is always talking nonsense?' 'I am.' Again they said 'Aren't you Agathon the heretic?' But at that he replied 'I am not a heretic.' So they asked him, 'Tell us why you accepted everything we cast at you, but repudiated this last insult.' He replied 'The first accusations I take to myself, for that is good for my soul. But heresy is separation from God. Now I have no wish to be separated from God.' At this saying they were astonished at his discernment and returned, edified.

6. It was said of Abba Agathon that he spent a long time building a cell with his disciples. At last when it was finished, they came to live there. Seeing something during the first week which seemed to him harmful, he said to his disciples, 'Get up, let us leave this place.' But they were dismayed and replied, 'If you had already decided to move, why have we taken so much trouble building the cell? People will be scandalized at us, and will say, "Look at them, moving again, what unstable people!"' He saw they were held back by timidity and so he said to them, 'If some are scandalized, others, on the contrary, will be much edified and will say, "How blessed are they who go away for God's sake, having no other care." However, let him who wants to come, come; as for me, I am going.' Then they prostrated themselves to the ground and besought him to allow them to go with him.

7. It was said of him also that he often went away taking nothing but his knife for making wicker-baskets.

8. Someone asked Abba Agathon, 'Which is better, bodily asceticism or interior vigilance?' The old man replied, 'Man is like a tree, bodily asceticism is the foliage, interior vigilance the fruit. According to that which is written, "Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit shall be cut down and cast into the fire" (Matt. 3, 10) it is clear that all our care should be directed towards the fruit, that is to say, guard of the spirit; but it needs the protection and the embellishment of the foliage, which is bodily asceticism.'

9. The brethren also asked him 'Amongst all good works, which is the virtue which requires the greatest effort?' He answered, 'Forgive me, but I think there is no labour greater than that of prayer to God. For every time a man wants to pray, his enemies, the demons, want to prevent him, for they

know that it is only by turning him from prayer that they can hinder his journey. Whatever good work a man undertakes, if he perseveres in it, he will attain rest. But prayer is warfare to the last breath.'

10. Abba Agathon was wise in spirit and active in body. He provided everything he needed for himself, in manual work, food, and clothing.

11. The same Abba Agathon was walking with his disciples. One of them, finding a small green pea on the road, said to the old man, 'Father, may I take it?' The old man, looking at him with astonishment, said, 'Was it you who put it there?' 'No,' replied the brother. 'How then,' continued the old man, 'can you take up something which you did not put down?'

12. A brother came to find Abba Agathon and said to him, 'Let me live with you.' On his way he had found a piece of nitre on the road and had brought it with him. 'Where did you find that nitre?' asked the old man. The brother replied, 'I found it on the road as I was coming and I picked it up.' The old man said to him, 'If you are coming to live with me, how can you take that which you did not put down?' Then he sent him to put it back where he had found it.

13. A brother asked the old man 'I have received a command, but there is danger of temptation in the place connected with it. Because of the command I wish to do it, but I am afraid of such danger.' The old man said to him, 'If this were Agathon's problem, he would fulfil the commandment and thus he would overcome the temptation.'

14. A meeting had been held at Scetis about some matter and a decision was taken about it. When Agathon came in later, he said to them, 'You have not decided this matter rightly.' 'Who are you,' they retorted, 'to talk like that?' 'A son of man,' said he, 'for it is written, "if truly ye say that which is right, judge righteously, sons of men." (Ps. VII, 2)

15. It was said of Abba Agathon that for three years he lived with a stone in his mouth, until he had learnt to keep silence.

16. It was said of him and of Abba Amoun that, when they had anything to sell, they would name the price just once and silently accept what was given them in peace. Just as, when they wished to buy something, they gave the price they were asked in silence and took the object adding no further word.

17. The same Abba Agathon said, 'I have never offered agapes; but the fact of giving and receiving has been for me an agape, for I consider the good of my brother to be a sacrificial offering.'

18. Whenever his thoughts urged him to pass judgement on something which he saw, he would say to himself, 'Agathon, it is not your business to do that.' Thus his spirit was always recollected.

19. The same abba said, 'A man who is angry, even if he were to raise the dead, is not acceptable to God.'

20. At one time Abba Agathon had two disciples each leading the anchoritic life according to his own measure. One day he asked the first, 'How do you live in the cell?' He replied, 'I fast until the evening, then I eat two hard biscuits.' He said to him, 'Your way of life is good, not overburdened with too much asceticism.' Then he asked the other one, 'And you, how do you live?' He replied, 'I fast for two days, then I eat two hard biscuits.' The old man said, 'You work very hard by enduring two conflicts; it is a labour for someone to eat every day without greed; there are others who, wishing to fast for two days, are greedy afterwards; but you, after fasting for two days, are not greedy.'

21. A brother asked Abba Agathon about fornication. He answered, 'Go, cast your weakness before God and you shall find rest.'

22. Abba Agathon and another old man were ill. While they were lying in their cell, the brother who was reading Genesis to them came to the chapter where Jacob said, 'Joseph is no more, Simeon is no more, and thou dost take Benjamin away from me; thou wilt bring my grey hairs in sorrow to the grave.' (Gen. 42.36, 38.) The other old man began to say, 'Are not the ten enough for you, Abba Jacob?' But Abba Agathon replied, 'Let be, old man, if God is the God of the righteous, who shall condemn Jacob?'

23. Abba Agathon said, 'If someone were very specially dear to me, but I realized that he was leading me to do something less good, I should put him from me.'

24. He also said, 'A man ought at all times to be aware of the judgements of God.'

25. One day when the brethren were conversing about charity, Abba Joseph said, 'Do we really know what charity is?' Then he told how when a brother came to see Abba Agathon, he greeted him and did not let him go until he had taken with him a small knife which he had.

26. Abba Agathon said, 'If I could meet a leper, give him my body and take his, I should be very happy.' That indeed is perfect charity.

27. It was also said of him that, coming to the town one day to sell his wares, he encountered a sick traveller lying in the public place without anyone to

look after him. The old man rented a cell and lived with him there, working with his hands to pay the rent and spending the rest of his money on the sick man's needs. He stayed there four months till the sick man was restored to health. Then he returned in peace to his cell.

28. Abba Daniel said, 'Before Abba Arsenius came to live with my Fathers, they dwelt with Abba Agathon. Now Abba Agathon loved Abba Alexander because he was both ascetic and discreet. Now it happened that all the disciples were washing their rushes in the river, but Abba Alexander was washing his with discretion. The other brothers said to the old man, 'Brother Alexander is getting nowhere.' Wishing to cure them he said to him, 'Brother Alexander, wash them thoroughly because they are flax.' The brother was hurt by these words. Afterwards the old man comforted him, saying, 'Did I not know that you were working well? But I said that in front of them in order to cure them by your obedience, brother.'

29. It was said of Abba Agathon that he forced himself to fulfil all the commandments. When he sailed in a vessel he was the first to handle the oars and when the brethren came to see him he laid the table with his own hands, as soon as they had prayed, because he was full of the love of God. When he was at the point of death he remained three days with his eyes fixed, wide-open. The brethren roused him, saying, 'Abba Agathon, where are you?' He replied, 'I am standing before the judgement seat of God.' They said, 'Are you not afraid, Father?' He replied, 'Until this moment, I have done my utmost to keep the commandments of God; but I am a man; how should I know if my deeds are acceptable to God?' The brethren said to him, 'Do you not have confidence in all that you have done according to the law of God?' The old man replied, 'I shall have no confidence until I meet God. Truly the judgement of God is not that of man.' When they wanted to question him further, he said to them, 'Of your charity, do not talk to me any more, for I no longer have time.' So he died with joy. They saw him depart like one greeting his dearest friends. He preserved the strictest vigilance in all things, saying, 'Without great vigilance a man does not advance in even a single virtue.'

30. Going to town one day to sell some small articles, Abba Agathon met a cripple on the roadside, paralysed in his legs, who asked him where he was going. Abba Agathon replied, 'To town, to sell some things.' The other said, 'Do me the favour of carrying me there.' So he carried him to the town. The cripple said to him, 'Put me down where you sell your wares.' He did so. When he had sold an article, the cripple asked, 'What did you sell it for?' and he told him the price. The other said, 'Buy me a cake,' and he bought it.

When Abba Agathon had sold a second article, the sick man asked, 'How much did you sell it for?' And he told him the price of it. Then the other said, 'Buy me this,' and he bought it. When Agathon, having sold all his wares, wanted to go, he said to him, 'Are you going back?' and he replied, 'Yes.' Then said he, 'Do me the favour of carrying me back to the place where you found me.' Once more picking him up, he carried him back to that place. Then the cripple said, 'Agathon, you are filled with divine blessings, in heaven and on earth.' Raising his eyes, Agathon saw no man; it was an angel of the Lord, come to try him.

AMMONAS

Ammonas was Abba Anthony's disciple and successor on the Outer Mountain of Pispis. He probably came from Scetis. He later became a bishop. Several letters are attributed to him.

1. A brother asked Abba Ammonas, 'Give me a word,' and the old man replied, 'Go, make your thoughts like those of the evildoers who are in prison. For they are always asking when the magistrate will come, awaiting him in anxiety. Even so the monk ought to give himself at all times to accusing his own soul, saying, "Unhappy wretch that I am. How shall I stand before the judgement seat of Christ? What shall I say to him in my defence?" If you give yourself continually to this, you may be saved.'

2. It was said of Abba Ammonas that he had killed a basilisk. Going into the desert one day to draw water from the lake and seeing a basilisk, he threw himself face to the ground saying: 'Lord, either I die or he does,' and immediately, by the power of God, the basilisk burst asunder.

3. Abba Ammonas said, 'I have spent fourteen years in Scetis asking God night and day to grant me the victory over anger.'

4. One of the Fathers telling about the Cells, said there was once a hard-working old man there who wore a mat. He went to find Abba Ammonas, who, when he saw him wearing the mat, said to him, 'This is no use to you.' But the old man questioned him in the following way, 'Three thoughts occupy me, either, should I wander in the deserts, or should I go to a foreign land where no-one knows me, or should I shut myself up in a cell without opening the door to anyone, eating only every second day.' Abba Ammonas replied, 'It is not right for you to do any of these three things. Rather, sit in your cell and eat a little every day, keeping the word of the publican always in your heart, and you may be saved.'

5. Some brethren found life difficult where they were living. Wanting to leave, they came to find Abba Ammonas. He was out on the river. Seeing them walking along the bank of the river, he asked the sailors to put him ashore. Then he called the brethren, saying to them, 'I am Ammonas, to whose dwelling you are wanting to go.' Having comforted their hearts, he sent them back whence they had come, for this difficulty did not arise from sickness of soul, but simply from natural annoyance.

6. One day when Abba Ammonas went to cross the river, he found the ferry-boat ready to go and sat down in it. Then another boat came to the place and transported the men who were there. They said to him, 'Come here, Father, and cross the river with us.' But he replied, 'I will not embark except in the public vessel.' As he had a handful of palm branches, he sat down, weaving them, and then undoing them, until the boat came alongside. Thus he made the crossing. Then the brethren made him a reverence, saying, 'Why did you do that?' The old man said to them, 'So as to walk without any anxiety of spirit.' That is an example; we must walk in the way of God in peace.

7. Abba Ammonas was going to pay a visit to Abba Anthony, one day, and he lost his way. So sitting down, he fell asleep for a little while. On waking, he prayed thus to God, 'I beseech you, O Lord my God, do not let your creature perish.' Then there appeared to him as it were a man's hand in the heavens, which showed him the way, till he reached Abba Anthony's cave.

8. Abba Anthony predicted that this Abba Ammonas would make progress in the fear of God. He led him outside his cell, and showing him a stone, said to him, 'Hurt this stone, and beat it.' He did so. Then Anthony asked him, 'Has the stone said anything?' He replied, 'No.' Then Anthony said, 'You too will be able to do that,' and that is what happened. Abba Ammonas advanced to the point where his goodness was so great, he took no notice of wickedness. Thus, having become bishop, someone brought a young girl who was pregnant to him, saying, 'See what this unhappy wretch has done; give her a penance.' But he, having marked the young girl's womb with the sign of the cross, commanded that six pairs of fine linen sheets should be given her, saying, 'It is for fear that, when she comes to give birth, she may die, she or the child, and have nothing for the burial.' But her accusers resumed, 'Why did you do that? Give her a punishment.' But he said to them, 'Look, brothers, she is near to death; what am I to do?' Then he sent her away and no old man dared accuse anyone any more.

9. It was said of him that some people came to him to be judged, and Abba Ammonas feigned madness. A woman standing near him said to her neighbour, 'The old man is mad.' Abba Ammonas heard it, called her, and said, 'How much labour have I given myself in the desert to acquire this folly and through you I have lost it today!'

10. Abba Ammonas came one day to eat in a place where there was a monk of evil repute. Now it happened that a woman came and entered the cell of the brother of evil reputation. The dwellers in that place, having learnt this, were troubled and gathered together to chase the brother from his cell. Knowing that Bishop Ammonas was in the place, they asked him to join them. When the brother in question learnt this, he hid the woman in a large cask. The crowd of monks came to the place. Now Abba Ammonas saw the position clearly but for the sake of God he kept the secret; he entered, seated himself on the cask and commanded the cell to be searched. Then when the monks had searched everywhere without finding the woman, Abba Ammonas said, 'What is this? May God forgive you!' After praying, he made everyone go out, then taking the brother by the hand he said, 'Brother, be on your guard.' With these words, he withdrew.

11. Abba Ammonas was asked, 'What is the "narrow and hard way?"' (Matt. 7.14) He replied, 'The "narrow and hard way" is this, to control your thoughts, and to strip yourself of your own will, for the sake of God. This is also the meaning of the sentence, "Lo, we have left everything and followed you"' (Matt. 19.27)

ACHILLES

1. Three old men, of whom one had a bad reputation, came one day to Abba Achilles. The first asked him, 'Father, make me a fishing-net.' 'I will not make you one,' he replied. Then the second said, 'Of your charity make one, so that we may have a souvenir of you in the monastery.' But he said, 'I do not have time.' Then the third one, who had a bad reputation, said, 'Make me a fishing-net, so that I may have something from your hands, Father.' Abba Achilles answered him at once, 'For you, I will make one.' Then the two other old men asked him privately, 'Why did you not want to do what we asked you, but you promised to do what he asked?' The old man gave them this answer, 'I told you I would not make one, and you were not disappointed, since you thought that I had no time. But if I had not made one for him, he would have said, "The old man has heard about my sin, and that is why he does not want to make me anything"; and so our

relationship would have broken down. But now I have cheered his soul, so that he will not be overcome with grief.'

2. Abba Bitimios said, 'One day when I was going down to Scetis, someone gave me some fruit to take to the old men. So I knocked on the door of Abba Achilles' cell, to give him some. But he said to me, "Brother, from now on I do not want you to knock on my door with any sort of food and do not go to knock at any other cells either." So I withdrew to my cell, and took the fruit to the church.'

3. Abba Achilles came one day to Abba Isaiah's cell at Scetis, and found him in the act of eating something. He had mixed it with salt and water on a plate. The old man, seeing that he was hiding it behind some plaited reeds, said to him, 'Tell me, what are you eating?' He replied, 'Forgive me, Father, I was cutting palm-leaves and I went out in the heat; and I put a morsel into my mouth, with some salt, but the heat burnt my throat and the mouthful did not go down. So I was obliged to add a little water to the salt, in order to swallow it. Forgive me, Father.' The old man said, 'Come, all of you, and see Isaiah eating sauce in Scetis. If you want to eat sauce, go to Egypt.'

4. An old man who came to see Abba Achilles found him spitting blood out of his mouth. He asked him, 'What is the matter, Father?' The old man answered, 'The word of a brother grieved me, I struggled not to tell him so and I prayed God to rid me of this word. So it became like blood in my mouth and I have spat it out. Now I am in peace, having forgotten the matter.'

5. Abba Ammoes said, 'With Abba Bitimios, we went to see Abba Achilles. We heard him meditating on this saying, "Do not fear, Jacob, to go down into Egypt." (Gen. 46.3) For a long time he remained making this meditation. When we knocked, he opened the door and asked us where we came from. Being afraid to say we came from the Cells, we replied, from the mountain of Nitria. Then he said to us, "What can I do for you who come from so far away?" He asked us to come in. We noticed that he had been working the whole night and had woven a great deal and we asked him to say a word to us. He said to us, "From yesterday evening till now, I have woven twenty measures, although I do not need it; but it is for fear God should be angry and accuse me, saying, 'why did you not work, when you could have done so?' That is why I give myself this labour and do as much as I can." So we went away, greatly edified.'

6. Another time, a great old man came to the Thebaid to see Abba Achilles

and said to him, 'Father, you are a temptation to me.' He said to him, 'Come, even you, old man, you are still tempted because of me?' In his humility, the old man replied, 'Yes, Father.' Now there was an old blind and lame man sitting close to the door. The old man said to him, 'I should like to have stayed here several days, but I cannot because of the old man.' At these words, Abba Achilles wondered at the old man's humility, and said, 'This is not fornication, but hatred of the evil demons.'

AMMOE

1. It was said of Abba Ammoe that when he went to church, he did not allow his disciple to walk beside him but only at a certain distance; and if the latter came to ask him about his thoughts, he would move away from him as soon as he had replied, saying to him, 'It is for fear that, after edifying words, irrelevant conversation should slip in, that I do not keep you with me.'

2. At first, Abba Ammoe said to Abba Isaiah, 'What do you think of me now?' He said to him, 'You are an angel, Father.' Later on he said to him, 'And now, what do you think of me?' He replied, 'You are like Satan. Even when you say a good word to me, it is like steel.'

3. It was said of Abba Ammoe that, illness having kept him in bed for many long years, he never allowed himself to think about his cell or look to see what it contained. For people brought him many things, on account of his illness. When John, his disciple, entered or went out, he would close his eyes, so as not to see what he was doing. For he knew that he was a faithful monk.

4. Abba Poemen said that a brother came to find Abba Ammoe to ask him for a word. He remained with him for seven days without the old man answering him. Then, sending him away, the latter said to him, 'Go, watch yourself; as for me my sins have become a well of darkness between me and God.'

5. It was said of Abba Ammoe that he had fifty measures of wheat for his use and had put them out in the sun. Before they were properly dried off, he saw something in that place which seemed to him to be harmful so he said to his servants, 'Let us go away from here.' But they were grieved at this. Seeing their dismay he said to them, 'Is it because of the loaves that you are sad? Truly, I have seen monks fleeing, leaving their white-washed cells and

also their parchments, and they did not close the doors, but went leaving them open.'

AMOUN of NITRIA

Amoun, the third great founder of Egyptian monasticism, with Anthony and Pachomius. Born in c. A.D. 295 he married, then he and his wife lived as ascetics for eighteen years. In 315, he retired to Nitria and became the first monk there. Disciples joined him and he became their leader. He died in A.D. 337.

1. Abba Amoun of Nitria came to see Abba Anthony and said to him, 'Since my rule is stricter than yours how is it that your name is better known amongst men than mine is?' Abba Anthony answered, 'It is because I love God more than you.'

2. It was said of Abba Amoun that a very small quantity of wheat every two months was sufficient for him. Now he went to find Abba Poemen and said to him, 'When I go to my neighbour's cell, or when he comes to mine for some need or other, we are afraid of entering into conversation, for fear of slipping into worldly subjects.' The old man replied, 'You are right, for young men need to be watchful.' Then Abba Amoun continued, 'But the old men, what do they do?' He replied, 'The old men who have advanced in virtue, have nothing in them that is worldly; there is nothing worldly in their mouths of which they could speak.' 'But,' Amoun replied, 'When I am obliged to speak to my neighbour, do you prefer me to speak of the Scriptures or of the sayings of the Fathers?' The old man answered him, 'If you can't be silent, you had better talk about the sayings of the Fathers than about the Scriptures; it is not so dangerous.'

3. A brother came to Scetis to see Abba Amoun and said to him, 'My Father is sending me out on an errand but I am afraid of fornication.' The old man answered, 'Whatever the hour when the temptation comes upon you, say, "God of all virtue, by the prayers of my father, save me from it." So one day when a young girl closed the door upon him, he began to cry out with all his might, "God of my father, save me," and immediately he found himself on the road to Scetis.

ANOUB

Anoub was one of the seven brothers of Poemen whose sayings occupy a large place in the Apophthegmata. Three of the brothers, Anoub, Paesius

and Poemen lived together at first in Scetis, with Poemen as their leader. After the first devastation of Scetis (407–8) they went with their brothers to Ternuthis where they decided to stay together and live the cenobitic life, with Anoub taking charge. The Devastation of Scetis marks a turning point in the history of early monasticism in Egypt; the monks dispersed, and gradually the centre shifted from Egypt to Palestine. This story of Anoub and his brothers indicates a new reason for the formation of cenobitic communities, that is, protection against invaders.

1. Abba John said of Abba Anoub and Abba Poemen and the rest of their brethren who come from the same womb and were made monks in Scetis, that when the barbarians came and laid waste that district for the first time, they left for a place called Terenutis until they decided where to settle. They stayed in an old temple several days. Then Abba Anoub said to Abba Poemen, 'For love's sake do this: let each of us live in quietness, each one by himself, without meeting one another the whole week.' Abba Poemen replied, 'We will do as you wish.' So they did this. Now there was in the temple a statue of stone. When he woke up in the morning, Abba Anoub threw stones at the face of the statue and in the evening he said to it, 'Forgive me.' During the whole week he did this. On Saturday they came together and Abba Poemen said to Abba Anoub, 'Abba, I have seen you during the whole week throwing stones at the face of the statue and kneeling to ask it to forgive you. Does a believer act thus?' The old man answered him, 'I did this for your sake. When you saw me throwing stones at the face of the statue, did it speak, or did it become angry?' Abba Poemen said 'No.' 'Or again, when I bent down in penitence, was it moved, and did it say, "I will not forgive you?"' Again Abba Poemen answered 'No.' Then the old man resumed, 'Now we are seven brethren; if you wish us to live together, let us be like this statue, which is not moved whether one beats it or whether one flatters it. If you do not wish to become like this, there are four doors here in the temple, let each one go where he will.' Then the brethren prostrated themselves and said to Abba Anoub, 'We will do as you wish, Father, and we will listen to what you say to us.' Abba Poemen added, 'Let us live together to the rest of our time, working according to the word which the old man has given us.' He made one of them housekeeper and all that he brought them, they ate and none of them had the authority to say, 'Bring us something else another time,' or perhaps, 'We do not want to eat this.' Thus they passed all their time in quietness and peace.

2. Abba Anoub said, 'Since the day when the name of Christ was invoked upon me, no lie has come out of my mouth.'

ABRAHAM

1. It was said of an old man that for fifty years he had neither eaten bread nor drunk wine readily. He even said, 'I have destroyed fornication, avarice and vain-glory in myself.' Learning that he had said this, Abba Abraham came and said to him, 'Did you really say that?' He answered 'Yes.' Then Abba Abraham said to him, 'If you were to find a woman lying on your mat when you entered your cell would you think that it is not a woman?' 'No,' he replied, 'But I should struggle against my thoughts so as not to touch her.' Then Abba Abraham said, 'Then you have not destroyed the passion, but it still lives in you although it is controlled. Again, if you are walking along and you see some gold amongst the stones and shells, can your spirit regard them all as of equal value?' 'No,' he replied, 'But I would struggle against my thoughts, so as not to take the gold.' The old man said to him, 'See, avarice still lives in you, though it is controlled.' Abba Abraham continued, 'Suppose you learn that of two brothers one loves you while the other hates you, and speaks evil of you; if they come to see you, will you receive them both with the same love?' 'No,' he replied, 'But I should struggle against my thoughts so as to be as kind towards the one who hates me as towards the one who loves me.' Abba Abraham said to him, 'So then, the passions continue to live; it is simply that they are controlled by the saints.'

2. A brother questioned Abba Abraham, saying, 'If I find myself eating often, what will come of it?' The old man replied in this way, 'What are you saying, brother? Do you eat so much? Or perhaps you think that you have come to the threshing floor to thresh grain?'

3. Abba Abraham told of a man of Scetis who was a scribe and did not eat bread. A brother came to beg him to copy a book. The old man whose spirit was engaged in contemplation, wrote, omitting some phrases and with no punctuation. The brother, taking the book and wishing to punctuate it, noticed that words were missing. So he said to the old man, 'Abba, there are some phrases missing.' The old man said to him, 'Go, and practice first that which is written, then come back and I will write the rest.'

ARES

1. Abba Abraham went to see Abba Ares. They were sitting together when a brother came to the old man and said to him, 'Tell me what I must do to be

saved.' He replied, 'Go, and for the whole of this year eat only bread and salt in the evening. Then come back here and I will talk to you again.' The monk went away and did this. When the year was over he came back to Abba Ares. Now by chance it happened that Abba Abraham was there again. Once more the old man said to the brother, 'Go, and for the whole of this year fast for two days at a time.' When the brother had gone, Abba Abraham said to Abba Ares, 'Why do you prescribe an easy yoke to all the brethren, while you impose such a heavy burden on this brother?' The old man replied, 'How I send them away depends upon what the brethren came to seek. Now it is for the sake of God that this one comes to hear a word, for he is a hard worker and what I tell him he carries out eagerly. It is because of this that I speak the word of God to him.'

ALONIOS

1. Abba Alonios said, 'If a man does not say in his heart, in the world there is only myself and God, he will not gain peace.'
2. He also said, 'If I had not destroyed myself completely, I should not have been able to rebuild and shape myself again.'
3. He also said, 'If only a man desired it for a single day from morning till night, he would be able to come to the measure of God.'
4. One day Abba Agathon questioned Abba Alonios saying, 'How can I control my tongue so as to tell no more lies?' And Abba Alonios said to him, 'If you do not lie, you prepare many sins for yourself.' 'How is that?' said he. The old man said to him, 'Suppose two men have committed a murder before your eyes and one of them fled to your cell. The magistrate, seeking him, asks you, "Have you seen the murderer?" If you do not lie, you will deliver that man to death. It is better for you to abandon him unconditionally to God, for He knows all things.'

APPHY

1. They used to say of a bishop of Oxyrrynchos, named Abba Apphy, that when he was a monk he submitted himself to a very severe way of life. When he became a bishop he wished to practise the same austerity, even in the world, but he had not the strength to do so. Therefore he prostrated himself before God saying, 'Has your grace left me because of my episcopate?' Then he was given this revelation, 'No, but when you were in solitude and

there was no one else it was God who was your helper. Now that you are in the world, it is man.'

APOLLO

Apollo became a monk in Scetis after a hideous act of outrage. He is an example, if a somewhat extreme example, of the rough Coptic monks who formed the greater number of the monks of Egypt; the contrast between such a man and the scholarly Evagrius or the Roman aristocrat, Arsenius, is very marked and explains some of the problems that arose between them.

1. There was in the Cells an old man called Apollo. If someone came to find him about doing a piece of work, he would set out joyfully, saying, 'I am going to work with Christ today, for the salvation of my soul, for that is the reward He gives.'
2. It was said of a certain Abba Apollo of Scetis, that he had been a shepherd and was very uncouth. He had seen a pregnant woman in the field one day and being urged by the devil, he had said, 'I should like to see how the child lies in her womb.' So he ripped her up and saw the foetus. Immediately his heart was troubled and, filled with compunction, he went to Scetis and told the Fathers what he had done. Now he heard them chanting, 'The years of our age are three score years and ten, and even by reason strength fourscore; yet their span is but toil and trouble.' (Ps. 90.10) He said to them, 'I am forty years old and I have not made one prayer; and now, if I live another year, I shall not cease to pray God that He may pardon my sins.' In fact, he did not work with his hands but passed all his time in prayer, saying, 'I, who as man have sinned, do Thou, as God, forgive.' So his prayer became his activity by night and day. A brother who lived with him heard him saying, 'I have sinned against You, Lord; forgive me, that I may enjoy a little peace.' And he was sure that God had forgiven him all his sins, including the murder of the woman; but for the child's murder, he was in doubt. Then an old man said to him, 'God has forgiven you even the death of the child, but he leaves you in grief because that is good for your soul.'
3. With regard to receiving the brethren, the same abba said that one should bow before the brethren who come, because it is not before them, but before God that we prostrate ourselves. 'When you see your brother,' he said, 'you see the Lord your God.' He added, 'We have learnt that from Abraham. (cf. Gen. 18) When you receive the brethren, invite them to rest awhile,

for this is what we learn from Lot who invited the angels to do so.' (cf. Gen. 19.3)

ANDREW

1. Abba Andrew said, 'These three things are appropriate for a monk: exile, poverty, and endurance in silence.'

AIO

They said there was a certain old man in the Thebaid, Abba Antionus, who did many good works while he was young, but when he grew old he became sick and blind. Since he was ill, the brethren took great care of him, even putting his food in his mouth. They asked Abba Aio what would come of this solicitude. He replied, 'I tell you, if when he eats even one date he does so eagerly and willingly, God takes that away from his works; but if he receives it reluctantly and unwillingly, God will keep his works intact, since he has to do this against his will. The brethren will receive their reward.'

AMMONATHAS

1. A magistrate came one day to Pelousium to levy the poll-tax on the monks, as on the secular population. All the brothers assembled together about this proposal and went to Abba Ammonathas. Some of the Fathers thought they ought to go and see the emperor about it. Abba Ammonathas said to them, 'So much trouble is not necessary. Rather remain quietly in your cells, fast for two weeks, and I alone, with the grace of God, will deal with this matter.' So the brothers went back to their cells. The old man stayed in the peace of his own cell. At the end of a fortnight the brethren were dissatisfied with the old man, whom they had not seen stir, and they said, 'The old man has done nothing about our business.' On the fifteenth day, according to their agreement, the brethren assembled again and the old man came with a letter bearing the emperor's seal. On seeing this the brethren said to him, in great astonishment, 'When did you get that, Abba?' Then the old man said, 'Believe me, brothers, I went that night to the emperor, who wrote this letter; then, going to Alexandria, I had it countersigned by the magistrate and thus I returned to you.' Hearing this, the brothers were filled with fear, and did penance before him. So their business was settled, and the magistrate troubled them no further.

BETA

BASIL the GREAT

Basil the Great (c. 330-79) was the brother of Gregory of Nyssa and Macrina. After an excellent education he became a monk in Syria and Egypt and settled for a time as a hermit in Neocaesarea (358). In 370 he succeeded Eusebius as bishop of Caesarea and was the defender of Orthodoxy against the heresy of Arius. He organized monastic life in and around Caesarea, bringing structure and organization into the way of life learnt in Egypt. He put forward in two books precepts for the monastic life, called *The Longer Rule* and *The Shorter Rule*; this was revised by Theodore the Studite in the early ninth century, and is a basic document for Eastern monasticism.

1. One of the old men said, 'When Saint Basil came to the monastery one day, he said to the abbot, after the customary exhortation, "Have you a brother here who is obedient?" The other replied, "They are all your servants, master, and strive for their salvation." But he repeated, "Have you a brother who is really obedient?" Then the abbot led a brother to him and Saint Basil used him to serve during the meal. When the meal was ended, the brother brought him some water for rinsing his hands and Saint Basil said to him, "Come here, so that I also may offer you water." The brother allowed the bishop to pour the water. Then Saint Basil said to him, "When I enter the sanctuary, come, that I may ordain you deacon." When this was done, he ordained him priest and took him with him to the bishop's palace because of his obedience.'

BESSARION

The sayings of Bessarion recorded here are given in the first person by his disciple Doulas. No. 4 shows him visiting John of Lycopolis at the time of the destruction of the pagan temples in Alexandria in 391, when the Serapion was overthrown. That ambivalent person, Theophilus of Alexandria, appears to have used the simpler Coptic monks' as shock

troops in his conflicts with both paganism and heresy; the story of Hypatia is after all based on actual events. This story also introduces the presence of women ascetics in the desert, some of whose sayings are recorded later.

1. Abba Doulas, the disciple of Abba Bessarion said, 'One day when we were walking beside the sea I was thirsty and I said to Abba Bessarion, "Father, I am very thirsty." He said a prayer and said to me, "Drink some of the sea water." The water proved sweet when I drank some. I even poured some into a leather bottle for fear of being thirsty later on. Seeing this, the old man asked me why I was taking some. I said to him, "Forgive me, it is for fear of being thirsty later on." Then the old man said, "God is here, God is everywhere."

2. Another time when Abba Bessarion had occasion to do so, he said a prayer and crossed the river Chrysoroas on foot and then continued his way. Filled with wonder, I asked his pardon and said, 'How did your feet feel when you were walking on the water?' He replied, 'I felt the water just to my heels, but the rest was dry.'

3. On another day, while we were going to see an old man, the sun was setting. So Abba Bessarion said this prayer, 'I pray you, Lord, that the sun may stand still till we reach your servant,' and that is what happened.

4. On another day, when I came to his cell I found him standing at prayer with his hands raised towards heaven. For fourteen days he remained thus. Then he called me and told me to follow him. We went into the desert. Being thirsty, I said to him, 'Father, I am thirsty.' Then, taking my sheep-skin, the old man went about a stone's throw away and when he had prayed, he brought it back, full of water. Then we walked on and came to a cave where, on entering we found a brother seated, engaged in plaiting a rope. He did not raise his eyes to us, nor greet us, since he did not want to enter into conversation with us. So the old man said to me, 'Let us go; no doubt the old man is not sure if he ought to speak with us.' We continued our journey towards Lycopolis, till we reached Abba Johns' cell. After greeting him, we prayed, then the old man sat down to speak of the vision which he had had. Abba Bessarion said it had been made known to him that the temples would be overthrown. That is what happened: they were overthrown. On our return, we came again to the cave where we had seen the brother. The old man said to me, 'Let us go in and see him; perhaps God has told him to speak to us.' When we had entered, we found him dead. The old man said to me, 'Come, brother, let us take the body; it is for this reason God has sent us here.' When we took the body to bury it we perceived that it was a woman. Filled with astonishment, the old man said,

'See how the women triumph over Satan, while we still behave badly in the towns.' Having given thanks to God, who protects those who love him, we went away.

5. One day a man possessed with a devil came to Scetis, and they prayed over him, but the devil did not leave him, for it was obstinate. The priests said, 'What can we do against this devil? No one can drive him away, except Abba Bessarion, but if we call him, he will not come, even to the church. Therefore let us do this: since he comes to church early, before anyone else, let us make the possessed sleep here and when he comes, let us keep to our prayer, and say to him, "Abba, awaken the brother." ' This is what they did. When the old man came early, they kept to their prayer and said to him, 'Awaken the brother.' The old man said to him, 'Arise and go.' Immediately the devil departed from him and from that hour he was healed.

6. Abba Bessarion said, 'For fourteen days and nights, I have stood upright in the midst of thorn-bushes, without sleeping.'

7. A brother who had sinned was turned out of the church by the priest; Abba Bessarion got up and went with him, saying, 'I, too, am a sinner.'

8. The same Abba Bessarion said, 'For fourteen years I have never lain down, but have always slept sitting or standing.'

9. The same abba said, 'When you are at peace, without having to struggle, humiliate yourself for fear of being led astray by joy which is inappropriate; we magnify ourselves and we are delivered to warfare. For often, because of our weakness, God does not allow us to be tempted, for fear we should be overcome.'

10. A brother who shared a lodging with other brothers asked Abba Bessarion, 'What should I do?' The old man replied, 'Keep silence and do not compare yourself with others.'

11. Abba Bessarion, at the point of death, said, 'The monk ought to be as the Cherubim and the Seraphim: all eye.'

12. Abba Bessarion's disciples related that his life had been like that of a bird of the air, or a fish, or an animal living on earth, passing all the time of his life without trouble or disquiet. The care of a dwelling did not trouble him, and the desire for a particular place never seemed to dominate his soul, no more than the abundance of delights, or the possession of houses or the reading of books. But he seemed entirely free from all the passions of the body, sustaining himself on the hope of good things to come, firm in the strength of his faith; he lived in patience, like a prisoner who is led every-

where, always suffering cold and nakedness, scorched by the sun. He always lived in the open air, afflicting himself on the edge of the desert like a vagabond. Often he found it good to be carried over the sea to distant and uninhabited regions. When he happened to come into pleasanter places where the brethren lived a life in common, he would sit outside at the gate, weeping and lamenting like one shipwrecked and flung back on to the earth. Then if one of the brethren coming out found him there, sitting like one of the poor beggars living in the world, and filled with compassion approached him, asking, 'Man, why are you weeping? If you are in need of something, as far as we can we will see you receive it, only come in, share our table and rest yourself.' He would reply, 'I cannot live under a roof so long as I have not found again the riches of my house,' adding that he had lost great riches in various ways. 'I have fallen amongst pirates, I have suffered shipwreck, I have dishonoured my rank, becoming unknown, famous as I was.' The brother, moved by these words, returned, bringing a morsel of bread and giving it him, saying, 'Take this, Father; all the rest, as you say, God will restore to you; home, honour, and riches of which you speak.' But he, bewailing himself yet more, sighed deeply, adding, 'I cannot say if I shall find again those lost good things I seek, but I am still more afflicted, every day suffering the danger of death, having no respite because of my great calamities. For always I must wander, in order to finish my course.'

BENJAMIN

1. Abba Benjamin said, 'When we returned to Scetis, once the harvest was over, in payment they brought each of us a plaster vessel containing a pint of oil from Alexandria. When the time of harvest came again, the brothers brought what was left to the church. For my own part, I had not uncorked my vessel but had taken a little by piercing it with a stiletto, imagining in my heart that I had achieved something splendid. But when the brothers brought their plaster vessels as they were while mine was pierced, I was as ashamed as though I had committed fornication.'

2. Abba Benjamin, priest of the Cells, said, 'One day at Scetis we went to an old man, intending to take him a little oil but he said to us, "Look at the little vessel you brought me three years ago; it has remained there where you put it." At these words we wondered at the old man's virtue.'

3. The same abba said, 'We went to another old man who detained us for a meal and he offered us oil of horseradish. We said to him, "Father, give us

rather a little good oil." At these words he crossed himself and said, 'I did not know there was any other kind.'

4. As he was dying, Abba Benjamin said to his sons, 'If you observe the following, you can be saved, "Be joyful at all times, pray without ceasing and give thanks for all things."

5. He also said, 'Walk in the royal way, measuring the landmarks without meanness.'

BIARE

1. Someone questioned Abba Biare in these words, 'What shall I do to be saved?' He replied, 'Go, reduce your appetite and your manual work, dwell without care in your cell and you will be saved.'

GAMMA

GREGORY the THEOLOGIAN

1. Abba Gregory said, 'These three things God requires of all the baptized: right faith in the heart, truth on the tongue, temperance in the body.'
2. He also said, 'The whole life of a man is but one single day for those who are working hard with longing.'

GELASIOS

Gelasios trained as an ascetic in Egypt. He became abbot of Nicopolis in the mid-fifth century. He was a scholar and a great abbot, involved both in the ecclesiastical politics of his time and in the law-suits of his monastery. He was a firm supporter of Juvenal, and held to the formularies of Chalcedon. The second story here introduces the famous St Symeon Stylites, on his pillar outside Constantinople. Symeon is shown in the important role of arbitrator, to whom secular disputes as well as religious matters were brought in his role as prophet and holy man.

1. It was said of Abba Gelasios that he had a leather Bible worth eighteen pieces of silver. In fact it contained the whole of the Old and New Testaments. He had put it in the church so that any of the Brethren who wished, could read it. A strange brother came to see the old man and, seeing the Bible, wished to have it, and stole it as he was leaving. The old man did not run after him to take it from him, although he knew what he was doing. So the brother went to the city and tried to sell it, and finding a purchaser, he asked thirteen pieces of silver for it. The purchaser said to him, 'Lend it to me, first, so that I may examine it, then I will give you a price.' So he gave it to him. Taking it, the purchaser brought it to Abba Gelasios for him to examine it and told him the price which the seller had set. The old man said to him, 'Buy it, for it is beautiful, and worth the price you tell me.' This man when he returned, said something quite different to the seller, and not what the old man had said to him. 'I have shown it to Abba Gelasios,' he said, 'and he replied that it was dear, and not worth the price you said.' Hearing

this, he asked, 'Didn't the old man say anything else?' 'No,' he replied. Then the seller said, 'I do not want to sell it any more.' Filled with compunction, he went to find the old man, to do penance and ask him to take his book back. But he did not wish to make good his loss. So the brother said to him, 'If you do not take it back, I shall have no peace.' The old man answered, 'If you won't have any peace, then I will take it back.' So the brother stayed there until his death, edified by the old man's way of life.

2. A cell surrounded by a plot of land had been left to Abba Gelasios by an old man, also a monk, who had his dwelling near Nicopolis. Now a peasant farmer under Batacos, who was then living at Nicopolis in Palestine, went to find Batacos, asking to receive the plot of land, because, according to the law, it ought to return to him. Batacos was a violent man and he tried to take the field from Abba Gelasios by force. But our Abba Gelasios, not wishing that a monastic cell should be ceded to a secular, would not give up the land. Batacos, noticing that Abba Gelasios' beasts of burden were carrying olives from the field that had been left to him, turned them by force from their course and took the olives for himself; scarcely did he return the animals with their drivers, having caused them to suffer outrages. The blessed old man did not reclaim the fruit, but he did not cede possession of the land for the reason we have given above. Furious with him, Batacos, who had other matters to deal with also (for he loved lawsuits), betook himself to Constantinople, making the journey on foot. When he came near to Antioch, where Saint Symeon's fame was shining with great brilliance, he heard tell of him (he was indeed an eminent man) and, as a Christian, he desired to see the saint.

Blessed Symeon, from the top of his column, saw him as soon as he entered the monastery and asked him, 'Where do you come from and where are you going?' He replied, 'I am from Palestine and I am going to Constantinople.' He continued, 'and for what reasons?' Batacos replied, 'About many matters. I hope, thanks to the prayers of your holiness, to return and bow before your holy footprints.' Then Saint Symeon said to him, 'Wretch, you don't want to say that you are going to act against the man of God. But your way is not favourable for you and you will not see your house again. If you will follow my advice, leave these parts and hurry to him and ask his pardon, if you are still alive when you reach that place.' Immediately Batacos was seized with fever. His fellow travellers put him into a litter and he hastened, according to the word of Saint Symeon, to reach Abba Gelasios and to ask his pardon. But when he came to Beirut, he died without seeing his house again, according to the old man's prophecy. It is his son,

also called Batacos, who has told this to many trustworthy men, at the same time as he gave the account of his father's death.

3. Many of his disciples used to relate the following also: One day someone had brought them a fish and when it was cooked, the cook took it to the cellarer. An urgent reason obliged him to leave the store-room. So he left the fish on the ground in a dish, asking a young disciple of Abba Gelasios to look after it for a short while until his return. The boy was seized with desire and began to eat the fish greedily. The cellarer, finding him eating it on his return, was angry with the boy who was sitting on the ground and without being careful about what he did he kicked him. Being struck on a mortal part, by demonic power the boy gave up his spirit and died. The cellarer, overcome with fear, laid him on his own bed, covered him and went to throw himself at Abba Gelasios' feet, telling him what had happened. Gelasios advised him not to speak of it to anyone and ordered him to bring the boy, when everyone had gone to rest in the evening, to the *diaconicum*, place him before the altar and then to withdraw. Coming to the *diaconicum*, the old man continued in prayer; at the hour of the night psalmody, when the brethren assembled, the old man withdrew, followed by the little boy. No-one knew what had been done, save he and the cellarer, until his death.

4. Not only his disciples, but many of those who met him, often told this about Abba Gelasios. At the time of the ecumenical synod at Chalcedon, Theodosius who had taken the initiative in the schism of Dioscorus in Palestine, foreseeing that the bishops would return to their particular churches (for he was also present at Chalcedon, expelled from his fatherland because his fate was to stir up trouble), hastened to Abba Gelasios in his monastery. He spoke to him, opposing the synod, saying that the teaching of Nestorius had prevailed. By this means he thought to win over the holy man and bring him to his own delusion and schism. But he, because of the bearing of his interlocutor and the prudence with which God inspired him, understood the injurious nature of his words. Not only did he not join himself to this apostacy, as almost all the others did, but he sent him away covered with reproach. In fact, he made the young child whom he had raised from the dead come into their midst and he spoke thus, with great respect, 'If you want to argue about the faith, you have those close to you who will listen to you and answer you; for my part, I have not time to hear you.' These words filled Theodosius with confusion. Hurriedly he left for the holy city and there got all the monks on his side, under the pretext of fervent zeal. Then, using this as his aid, he seized possession of the throne

of Jerusalem. He had prepared the position for himself by assassinations and he did many things contrary to divine law and canonical precept. Having become master and attained his goal, laying hands on many bishops to set them on the thrones of bishops who had not yet retired, he made Abba Gelasios come to him. He invited him into the sanctuary, endeavouring to win him over, even while fearing him. When Gelasios entered the sanctuary, Theodosius said to him, 'Anathematize Juvenal.' But he remained unmoved and replied, 'I do not know any bishop of Jerusalem but Juvenal.' Theodosius, fearing others would imitate his holy zeal, ordered him to be driven out of the church, covering him with ridicule. The schismatics took him and put faggots round him, threatening to burn him. But seeing that even that did not make him give in nor frighten him and fearing a popular rising, for he was very celebrated (all this had been given him by Providence from above), they sent our martyr, who had offered himself as a holocaust to Christ, safe and sound away.

5. It was said of him that in his youth he had led a life of poverty as an anchorite. At that time in the same region there were many other men who, with him, had embraced the same life. Among them there was an old man of very great simplicity and poverty, living in a single cell to the end, although in his old age he had disciples. This old man's particular acts of asceticism had been to guard against having two tunics and till the day of his death not to think of the morrow whilst he was with his companions.

When Abba Gelasios, with the divine assistance, founded his monastery, he was given many gifts and he also acquired beasts of burden and cattle, which were needed for the monastery. In the beginning he had discussed the foundation of a monastery with the divine Pachomius and had recourse to him throughout its foundation. The old man, of whom we have spoken above, seeing him engaged on this, and wishing to preserve the great love he had for him, said to him, 'Abba Gelasios, I am afraid your spirit will become enslaved by the lands and all the other possessions of the monastery.' But he replied, 'Your spirit is more enslaved by the needle with which you work than the spirit of Gelasios by these goods.'

6. It was said of Abba Gelasios that he was often assailed by the thought of going to the desert. One day he said to his disciple, 'Do me the favour brother, of bearing with whatever I may do, and say nothing to me for the whole of this week.' Taking a reed, he began to walk in his little *atrium*. When he was tired, he sat down a little, then stood up again to walk about. When evening came, he said to himself, 'He who walks in the desert does not eat bread, but herbs; so because you are weary, eat a few vegetables.'

He did so, then said to himself again, ‘He who is in the desert does not lie in a bed, but in the open air; so do the same.’ So he lay down and slept in the *atrium*. He walked thus for three days in the monastery, eating a few chicory leaves in the evening and sleeping the whole night in the open air and he grew weary. Then, taking the thought which troubled him, he refuted it in these words, ‘If you are not able to perform the works of the desert, live patiently in your cell, weeping for your sins, without wandering here and there. For the eye of God always sees the works of a man and nothing escapes him and he knows those who do good.’

GERONTIOS

1. Abba Gerontios of Petra said that many, tempted by the pleasures of the body, commit fornication, not in their body but in their spirit, and while preserving their bodily virginity, commit prostitution in their soul. ‘Thus it is good, my well-beloved, to do that which is written, and for each one to guard his own heart with all possible care. (Prov. IV 23)

DELTA

DANIEL

Daniel was a disciple of Arsenius. He was present at his death in A.D. 449. Daniel being left his tunic, hair shirt and sandals said, ‘and I unworthy wear them that I may receive a blessing.’

1. It was said concerning Abba Daniel, that when the barbarians invaded Scetis and the Fathers fled away, the old man said, ‘If God does not care for me, why still live?’ Then he passed through the midst of the barbarians without being seen. He said to himself therefore, ‘See how God has cared for me, since I am not dead. Now I will do that which is human and flee with the Fathers.’
2. A brother asked Abba Daniel, ‘Give me a commandment and I will keep it.’ He replied, ‘Never put your hand in the dish with a woman, and never eat with her; thus you will escape a little the demon of fornication.’
3. Abba Daniel said, ‘At Babylon the daughter of an important person was possessed by a devil. A monk for whom her father had a great affection said to him, “No-one can heal your daughter except some anchorites whom I know; but if you ask them to do so, they will not agree because of their humility. Let us therefore do this: when they come to the market, look as though you want to buy their goods and when they come to receive the price, we will ask them to say a prayer and I believe she will be healed.” When they came to the market they found a disciple of the old men sitting there selling their goods and they led him away with the baskets, so that he should receive the price of them. But when the monk reached the house, the woman possessed with the devil came and slapped him. But he only turned the other cheek, according to the Lord’s Command. (Matt. V.39) The devil, tortured by this, cried out, “What violence! The commandment of Jesus drives me out.” Immediately the woman was cleansed. When the old men came, they told them what had happened and they glorified God saying, “This is how the pride of the devil is brought low, through the humility of the commandment of Christ.”’
4. Abba Daniel also said, ‘The body prospers in the measure in which the

soul is weakened, and the soul prospers in the measure in which the body is weakened.'

5. One day Abba Daniel and Abba Ammoe went on a journey together. Abba Ammoe said, 'When shall we, too, settle down, in a cell, Father?' Abba Daniel replied, 'Who shall separate us henceforth from God? God is in the cell, and, on the other hand he is outside also.'

6. Abba Daniel said that when Abba Arsenius was at Scetis, there was a monk there who used to steal the possessions of the old men. Abba Arsenius took him into his cell in order to convert him and to give the old men some peace. He said to him, 'Everything you want I will get for you, only do not steal.' So he gave him gold, coins, clothes and everything he needed. But the brother began to steal again. So the old men, seeing that he had not stopped, drove him away saying, 'If there is a brother who commits a sin through weakness, one must bear it, but if he steals, drive him away, for it is hurtful to his soul and troubles all those who live in the neighbourhood.'

7. This is what Abba Daniel, the Pharanite, said, 'Our Father Abba Arsenius told us of an inhabitant of Scetis, of notable life and of simple faith; through his naiveté he was deceived and said, "The bread which we receive is not really the body of Christ, but a symbol." Two old men having learnt that he had uttered this saying, knowing that he was outstanding in his way of life, knew that he had not spoken through malice, but through simplicity. So they came to find him and said, "Father, we have heard a proposition contrary to the faith on the part of someone who says that the bread which we receive is not really the body of Christ, but a symbol." The old man said, "It is I who have said that." Then the old men exhorted him saying, "Do not hold this position Father, but hold one in conformity with that which the catholic Church has given us. We believe, for our part, that the bread itself is the body of Christ and that the cup itself is his blood and this in all truth and not a symbol. But as in the beginning, God formed man in his image, taking the dust of the earth, without anyone being able to say that it is not the image of God, even though it is not seen to be so; thus it is with the bread of which he said that it is his body; and so we believe that it is really the body of Christ." The old man said to them, "As long as I have not been persuaded by the thing itself, I shall not be fully convinced." So they said, "Let us pray God about this mystery throughout the whole of this week and we believe that God will reveal it to us." The old man received this saying with joy and he prayed in these words, "Lord, you know that it is not through malice that I do not believe and so that I may not err through ignorance, reveal this mystery to me, Lord Jesus Christ."

The old men returned to their cells and they also prayed God, saying, "Lord Jesus Christ, reveal this mystery to the old man, that he may believe and not lose his reward." God heard both the prayers. At the end of the week they came to church on Sunday and sat all three on the same mat, the old man in the middle. Then their eyes were opened and when the bread was placed on the holy table, there appeared as it were a little child to these three alone. And when the priest put out his hand to break the bread, behold an angel descended from heaven with a sword and poured the child's blood into the chalice. When the priest cut the bread into small pieces, the angel, also cut the child in pieces. When they drew near to receive the sacred elements the old man alone received a morsel of bloody flesh. Seeing this he was afraid and cried out, "Lord, I believe that this bread is your flesh and this chalice your blood." Immediately the flesh which he held in his hand became bread, according to the mystery and he took it, giving thanks to God. Then the old men said to him, "God knows human nature and that man cannot eat raw flesh and that is why he has changed his body into bread and his blood into wine, for those who receive it in faith." Then they gave thanks to God for the old man, because he had allowed him not to lose the reward of his labour. So all three returned with joy to their own cells.'

8. The same Abba Daniel told of another great old man who dwelt in lower Egypt, who in his simplicity, said that Melchisedech was the son of God. When blessed Cyril, Archbishop of Alexandria, was told about this he sent someone to him. Learning that the old man was a worker of miracles and that all he asked of God was revealed to him, and that it was because of his simplicity that he had given utterance to this saying, using guile the Archbishop said to him, 'Abba, I think that Melchisedech is the son of God, while a contrary thought says to me, no, that he is simply a man, high-priest of God. Since I am thus plagued, I have sent someone to you that you may pray God to reveal to you what he is.' Confident of his gift, the old man said without hesitation, 'Give me three days, I will ask God about this matter and I will tell you who he is.' So he withdrew and prayed to God about this question. Coming three days later he said to the blessed Cyril that Melchisedech was a man. The archbishop said to him, 'How do you know, Abba?' He replied, 'God has shewn me all the patriarchs in such a way that each one, from Adam to Melchisedech, passed before me. Therefore be sure that it is so.' Then the old man withdrew, having preached to himself that Melchisedech was a man. Then the blessed Cyril rejoiced greatly.

DIOSCORUS

Dioscorus was a monk in Nitria. He was one of the Four Tall Brothers who were involved in the Origenist disputes with Theophilus. Palladius says Melania met Dioscorus on her visit to Egypt in A.D. 373-4. He was made Bishop of Hermopolis ten miles from Nitria, and attended the Council of Constantinople in 394. He was later deposed and excommunicated for supposed Origenist sympathies. He died in the early fifth century.

1. It was said of Abba Dioscoros the Nachiate, that he ate bread of barley and lentils. Every year he made a resolution about a particular thing, saying, 'I will not meet anyone this year; or else, I will not speak; or else, I will not eat cooked food; or else, I will not eat fruit or vegetables.' In all his work he acted thus, and when he had gained one point, he began another. Each year he did this.

2. A brother questioned Abba Poemen in this way, 'My thoughts trouble me, making me put my sins aside, and concern myself with my brother's faults.' The old man told him the following story about Abba Dioscoros, 'In his cell he wept over himself, while his disciple was sitting in another cell. When the latter came to see the old man he asked him, 'Father, why are you weeping?' 'I am weeping over my sins,' the old man answered him. Then his disciple said, 'You do not have any sins, Father.' The old man replied, 'Truly, my child, if I were allowed to see my sins, three or four men would not be enough to weep for them.'

3. Abba Dioscoros said, 'If we wear our heavenly robe, we shall not be found naked, but if we are found not wearing this garment, what shall we do, brothers? We, even we also, shall hear the voice that says, 'Cast them into outer darkness; there men will weep and gnash their teeth.' (Matt 22.13) And, brothers, there will be great shame in store for us, if, after having worn this habit for so long, we are found in the hour of need not having put on the wedding garment. Oh what compunction will seize us! What darkness will fall upon us, in the presence of our fathers and our brothers, who will see us being tortured by the angels of punishment!'

DOULAS

(See Bessarion, p. 33)

1. Abba Doulas said, 'If the enemy induces us to give up our inner peace, we must not listen to him, for nothing is equal to this peace and the privation

of food. The one and the other join together to fight the enemy. For they make interior vision keen.'

2. He also said, 'Detach yourself from the love of the multitude lest your enemy question your spirit and trouble your inner peace.'

EPSILON

EPIPHANIUS, Bishop of CYPRUS

Epiphanius was a Palestinian who learned his monasticism in Egypt as a disciple of Abba Hilarion. His monastery was at Besanduk near Eleutheropolis, between Jerusalem and Gaza. He was an opponent of Origenism. Saying 3 shows him upholding the traditions of Egypt against the abbot of his own monastery in Palestine with regard to prayer and psalmody. He, like Bessarion, was also concerned in the overthrow of the pagan temples in Alexandria. As a bishop, he set more store by books and reading than was usual with monks trained in Egypt.

1. The holy Bishop Epiphanius related that some crows, flying all around the temple of Serapis, in the presence of blessed Athanasius, cried without interruption, ‘Caw, Caw.’ Then some pagans, standing in front of blessed Athanasius cried out, ‘Wicked old man, tell us what these crows are crying.’ He answered, ‘These crows are saying, “Caw, caw”, and in the Ausonion (or Latin) language, this word means “tomorrow”.’ He added, ‘Tomorrow you shall see the glory of God.’ Just afterwards, the death of the Emperor Julian was announced. At this news they all ran to the temple of Serapis crying out against him and saying, ‘If you did not want him, why did you accept his gifts?’

2. The same related that there was a charioteer in Alexandria, whose mother was called Mary. In an equestrian fight he had a fall. Then getting up again he surpassed the men who had overthrown him and carried off the victory. The crowd cried out, ‘The son of Mary has fallen; he has risen again and is the victor.’ While these cries were still being heard, an uproar ran through the crowd in connection with the temple of Serapis; the great Theophilus had gone and overthrown the statue of Serapis and made himself master of the temple.

3. The blessed Epiphanius bishop of Cyprus was told this by the abbot of a monastery which he had in Palestine, ‘By your prayers we do not neglect our appointed round of psalmody, but we are very careful to recite Terce, Sext and None.’ Then Epiphanius corrected them with the following

comment, ‘It is clear that you do not trouble about the other hours of the day, if you cease from prayer. The true monk should have prayer and psalmody continually in his heart.’

4. One day Saint Epiphanius sent someone to Abba Hilarion with this request, ‘Come, and let us see one another before we depart from the body.’ When he came, they rejoiced in each other’s company. During their meal, they were brought a fowl; Epiphanius took it and gave it to Hilarion. Then the old man said to him, ‘Forgive me, but since I received the habit I have not eaten meat that has been killed.’ Then the bishop answered, ‘Since I took the habit, I have not allowed anyone to go to sleep with a complaint against me and I have not gone to rest with a complaint against anyone.’ The old man replied, ‘Forgive me, your way of life is better than mine.’

5. The same old man said, ‘Melchisedech, the image of Christ, blessed Abraham, the father of the Jews; how much more does truth itself, which is the Christ, bless and sanctify all those who believe in it.’

6. The same old man said, ‘The Canaanite woman cries out, and she is heard; (Matt. 15) the woman with the issue of blood is silent, and she is called blessed; (Luke 8) the pharisee speaks, and he is condemned; (Matt. 9) the publican does not open his mouth, and he is heard.’ (Luke 18)

7. The same old man said, ‘David the prophet prayed late at night; waking in the middle of the night, he prayed before the day; at the dawn of day he stood before the Lord; in the small hours he prayed, in the evening and at mid-day he prayed again, and this is why he said, ‘Seven times a day have I praised you.’ (Ps. 119.164)

8. He also said, ‘The acquisition of Christian books is necessary for those who can use them. For the mere sight of these books renders us less inclined to sin, and incites us to believe more firmly in righteousness.’

9. He also said, ‘Reading the Scriptures is a great safeguard against sin.’

10. He also said, ‘It is a great treachery to salvation to know nothing of the divine law.’

11. He also said, ‘Ignorance of the Scriptures is a precipice and a deep abyss.’

12. The same abba said, ‘The righteous sin through their mouths, but the ungodly sin in their whole bodies. This is why David sings; “Set, O Lord, a watch before my mouth and keep the door of my lips.” (Ps. 141.3) And again, “I will take heed to my ways that I do not sin with my tongue.”’ (Ps. 39.1)

13. Someone asked him, 'Why are there ten commandments in the Law and nine Beatitudes?' He replied, 'The Decalogue corresponds with the number of the plagues of Egypt, while the figure of the Beatitudes is three times the image of the Trinity.'

14. Someone else asked him, 'Is one righteous man enough to appease God?' He replied, 'Yes, for he himself has written: "Find a man who lives according to righteousness, and I will pardon the whole people."' (Jer. 5.1)

15. The same abba said, 'God remits the debts of sinners who are penitent, for example, the sinful woman and the publican, but of the righteous man he even asks interest. This is what he says to his apostles, "Except your righteousness exceed that of the scribes and pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven."' (Matt. 5.20)

16. He also said, 'God sells righteousness at a very low price to those who wish to buy it: a little piece of bread, a cloak of no value, a cup of cold water, a mite.'

17. He added, 'A man who receives something from another because of his poverty or his need has therein his reward, and, because he is ashamed, when he repays it he does so in secret. But it is the opposite for the Lord God; he receives in secret, but he repays it in the presence of the angels, the archangels and the righteous.'

EPHREM

(possibly Ephrem the Syrian, the hymn writer)

1. While yet a child, Abba Ephrem had a dream and then a vision. A branch of vine came out of his tongue, grew bigger and filled everything under heaven. It was laden with beautiful fruit. All the birds of heaven came to eat of the fruit of the vine, and the more they ate, the more the fruit increased.

2. Another time, one of the saints had a vision. According to the commandment of God, a band of angels descended from heaven, holding in their hands a *kephalis* (that is to say, a piece of papyrus covered with writing), and they said to one another, 'To whom should we give this?'—Some said, 'To this one,' others, 'To that one.' Then the answer came in these words, 'Truly, they are holy and righteous, but none of them is able to receive this, except Ephrem.' The old man saw that the *kephalis* was given to Ephrem and he saw as it were a fountain flowing from his lips. Then he understood that that which came from the lips of Ephrem was of the Holy Spirit.

3. Another time, when Ephrem was on the road, a prostitute tried by her flatteries, if not to lead him to shameful intercourse, at least to make him angry, for no-one had ever seen him angry. He said to her, 'Follow me.' When they had reached a very crowded place, he said to her, 'In this place, come, do what you desire.' But she, seeing the crowd, said to him, 'How can we do what we want to do in front of so great a crowd, without being ashamed?' He replied, 'If you blush before men, how much more should we blush before God, who knows what is hidden in darkness?' She was covered with shame and went away without having achieved anything.

EUCHARISTOS the SECULAR

1. Two Fathers asked God to reveal to them how far they had advanced. A voice came which said, 'In a certain village in Egypt there is a man called Eucharistos and his wife who is called Mary. You have not yet reached their degree of virtue.' The two old men set out and went to the village. Having enquired, they found his house and his wife. They said to her, 'Where is your husband?' She replied, 'He is a shepherd and is feeding the sheep.' Then she made them come into the house. When evening came, Eucharistos returned with the sheep. Seeing the old men, he set the table and brought water to wash their feet. The old men said to him, 'We shall not eat anything until you have told us about your way of life.' Eucharistos replied with humility, 'I am a shepherd, and this is my wife.' The old men insisted but he did not want to say more. Then they said, 'God has sent us to you.' At these words, Eucharistos was afraid and said, 'Here are these sheep; we received them from our parents, and if, by God's help we make a little profit, we divide it into three parts: one for the poor, the second for hospitality, and the third for our personal needs. Since I married my wife, we have not had intercourse with one another, for she is a virgin; we each live alone. At night we wear hair-shirts and our ordinary clothes by day. No-one has known of this till now.' At these words they were filled with admiration and went away giving glory to God.

EULOGIUS the PRIEST

1. A certain Eulogius, a disciple of blessed John the bishop, a priest and great ascetic, used to fast two days together and often extended his fast to the whole week, eating only bread and salt. Men thought highly of him. He went to Abba Joseph at Panephysis, in the hope of finding greater austerity

with him. The old man received him joyfully and supplied him with everything he had to refresh him. Eulogius' disciples said, 'The priest only eats bread and salt.' Abba Joseph ate in silence. The visitors spent three days there without hearing them chanting or praying, for the brothers laboured in secret. They went away without having been edified. By the will of God, it became so dark that they lost their way and returned to the old man. Before knocking on the door, they heard chanting. So they waited for a suitable moment and then knocked. Those who were inside, having ended their psalmody, received them joyfully. Then, because of the heat, the disciples of Eulogius rushed to the water jar and offered it to him. Now it contained a mixture of sea-water and river-water, so that he could not drink it. Coming to himself, Eulogius threw himself at the old man's feet and, wanting to know about his manner of life, he asked him, 'Abba, what is this? You did not chant before, but only after we left. And now when I take the jug, I find salt water in it.' The old man said to him, 'The brother is distraught and has mixed sea-water with it by mistake.' But Eulogius pressed the old man, wanting to learn the truth. So the old man said, 'This little bottle of wine is for hospitality, but that water is what the brothers always drink.' Then he instructed him in discernment of thoughts and in controlling all the merely human in himself. So he became more balanced and ate whatever was brought him and learnt how to work in secret. Then he said to the old man, 'Truly, your way of life is indeed genuine.'

EUPREPIOS

1. Abba Eupreprios said, 'Knowing that God is faithful and mighty, have faith in him and you will share what is his. If you are depressed, you do not believe. We all believe that he is mighty and we believe all is possible to him. As for your own affairs, behave with faith in him about them, too, for he is able to work miracles in you also.'

2. The same old man helped some thieves when they were stealing. When they had taken away what was inside his cell, Abba Eupreprios saw that they had left his stick and he was sorry. So he took it and ran after them to give it to them. But the thieves did not want to take it, fearing that something would happen to them if they did. So he asked someone he met who was going the same way to give the stick to them.

3. Abba Eupreprios said, 'Bodily things are compounded of matter. He who loves the world loves occasions of falling. Therefore if we happen to lose

something, we must accept this with joy and gratitude, realising that we have been set free from care.'

4. A brother questioned Abba Euprepios about his life. And the old man said, 'Eat straw, wear straw, sleep on straw: that is to say, despise everything and acquire for yourself a heart of iron.'

5. A brother asked the same old man, 'How does the fear of God dwell in the soul?' The old man said, 'If a man is possessed of humility and poverty, and if he does not judge others, the fear of God will come to him.'

6. He also said, 'May fear, humility, lack of food and compunction be with you.'

7. In his early days, Abba Euprepios went to see an old man and said to him, 'Abba, give me a word so that I may be saved.' The other replied, 'If you wish to be saved, when you go to see someone, do not begin to speak before you are spoken to.' Filled with compunction at this saying, he made a prostration, saying, 'I have read many books before, but never have I received such teaching,' and he went away greatly edified.

HELLADIOS

1. It was said of Abba Helladios that he spent twenty years in the Cells, without ever raising his eyes to see the roof of the church.

2. Of the same Abba Helladios, it was said that he was accustomed to eat bread and salt, and that when Easter came, he would say, 'The brothers eat bread and salt; as for me, I must make a little effort because of Easter. Therefore, since I eat sitting down all the other days, now that it is Easter, I will make this effort, and eat standing up.'

EVAGRIUS

Evagrius: born in Ibora in Pontus A.D. 345-6. He was ordained as a reader by Saint Basil, and deacon by Saint Gregory Nazianzen. He accompanied Saint Gregory to the Great Synod of Constantinople. In 382 he went to Jerusalem where he was nursed during a severe illness by Melania. In A.D. 383 he lived in Egypt and was for two years a monk in Nitria. He spent ten years as a disciple of Macarius of Alexandria in Cellia and was renowned both for his learning and the austerity of his life. He was the centre of the group who supported Origen, but died in 400 before the matter came to a crisis in Egypt. He was a well educated monk

and wrote about the spiritual life; his most famous works are the *Praktikos* and Chapters on Prayer.

1. Abba Evagrius said, 'Sit in your cell, collecting your thoughts. Remember the day of your death. See then what the death of your body will be; let your spirit be heavy, take pains, condemn the vanity of the world, so as to be able to live always in the peace you have in view without weakening. Remember also what happens in hell and think about the state of the souls down there, their painful silence, their most bitter groanings, their fear, their strife, their waiting. Think of their grief without end and the tears their souls shed eternally. But keep the day of resurrection and of presentation to God in remembrance also. Imagine the fearful and terrible judgement. Consider the fate kept for sinners, their shame before the face of God and the angels and archangels and all men, that is to say, the punishments, the eternal fire, worms that rest not, the darkness, gnashing of teeth, fear and supplications. Consider also the good things in store for the righteous: confidence in the face of God the Father and His Son, the angels and archangels and all the people of the saints, the kingdom of heaven, and the gifts of that realm, joy and beatitude.'

'Keep in mind the remembrance of these two realities. Weep for the judgement of sinners, afflict yourself for fear lest you too feel those pains. But rejoice and be glad at the lot of the righteous. Strive to obtain those joys but be a stranger to those pains. Whether you be inside or outside your cell, be careful that the remembrance of these things never leaves you, so that, thanks to their remembrance, you may at least flee wrong and harmful thoughts.'

2. He also said, 'Restrain yourself from affection towards many people, for fear lest your spirit be distracted, so that your interior peace may not be disturbed.'

3. He also said, 'It is a great thing to pray without distraction but to chant psalms without distraction is even greater.'

4. He also said, 'Always keep your death in mind and do not forget the eternal judgement, then there will be no fault in your soul.'

5. He also said, 'Take away temptations and no-one will be saved.'

6. He also said that one of the Fathers used to say, 'Eat a little without irregularity; if charity is joined to this, it leads the monk rapidly to the threshold of impassibility.'

7. One day at the Cells, there was an assembly about some matter or other and Abba Evagrius held forth. Then the priest said to him, 'Abba, we know that if you were living in your own country you would probably be a bishop'

and a great leader; but at present you sit here as a stranger.' He was filled with compunction, but was not at all upset and bending his head he replied, 'I have spoken once and will not answer, twice but I will proceed no further.' (Job 40.5)

EUDEMON

1. Abba Eudemon said this about Abba Paphnutius the Father of Scetis: 'I went down there while I was still young, and he would not let me stay, saying to me, "I do not allow the face of a woman to dwell in Scetis, because of the conflict with the enemy."'

DZÊTA

ZENO

Zeno was a famous disciple of Abba Silvanus, on Sinai. Like other monks in the early days in Egypt, he moved about a good deal in Egypt, Syria and Palestine. At the end of his life he settled near Gaza and in 451 he shut himself up and would see no-one until he died.

1. Abba Zeno, the disciple of blessed Sylvanus said, 'Do not live in a famous place, do not settle close to a man with a great name, and do not lay foundations for building yourself a cell one day.'

2. It was said of Abba Zeno, that from the outset he never wished to receive anything from anyone at all. Those who brought him something came away hurt that he had not accepted anything. Others came to him, wanting to receive some token from a great old man and he had nothing to give them so they too came away hurt. The old man said, 'What shall I do, since those who bring things are hurt just as much as those who wish to receive something? I know what seems right to me: when someone brings me something, I will accept it and I will give it to anyone who asks me for something.' So he did that and was at peace and satisfied everyone.

3. An Egyptian brother came to see Abba Zeno in Syria, and accused himself to the old man about his temptations. Filled with admiration, Zeno said, 'The Egyptians hide the virtues they possess and ceaselessly accuse themselves of faults they do not have, while the Syrians and Greeks pretend to have virtues they do not have, and hide the faults of which they are guilty.'

4. Some brothers came to see him and asked him, 'What does this saying in the book of Job mean: "Heaven is not pure in his presence?"' (Job 15.15) The old man replied, 'The brothers have passed over their sins and inquired about heavenly things. This is the interpretation of this saying: "God alone is pure," therefore he said, "heaven is not pure."'

5. It was said of Abba Zeno, that when he was living in Scetis, he came out of his cell by night, going in the direction of the marshes. He spent three

days and three nights wandering at random. At last, tired out, his strength failing him, he fell down as though he were dying. Behold, a little child stood before him with bread and a jar of water and said to him, 'Get up, and eat.' He stood up and prayed, thinking that it was a delusion. The other said to him, 'You have done well.' And he prayed a second, and then a third time. The child said again, 'You have done well.' Then the old man stood up, took some food and ate. The child said to him, 'As far as you have walked, so far are you from your cell. So then, get up, and follow me.' Immediately he found himself in his cell. So the old man said to the child, 'Enter, and let us pray.' But when the old man went inside, the other vanished.

6. Another time, the same Abba Zeno was walking in Palestine and he was tired. He sat down near a cucumber plant to eat and he said to himself, 'Take a cucumber and eat it. Truly it is only a little thing.' But he answered himself, 'Thieves are taken away to punishment. Examine yourself therefore, to see if you can bear punishment.' He got up and stood in the sun for five days. When he was quite burnt he said, 'You cannot bear punishment,' and he said to his thoughts, 'Since you cannot bear punishment, do not steal, and do not eat.'

7. Abba Zeno said, 'If a man wants God to hear his prayer quickly, then before he prays for anything else, even his own soul, when he stands and stretches out his hands towards God, he must pray with all his heart for his enemies. Through this action God will hear everything that he asks.'

8. In a village there was said to be a man who fasted to such a degree that he was called 'the Faster'. Abba Zeno had heard of him, and he sent for him. The other came gladly. They prayed and sat down. The old man began to work in silence. Since he could not succeed in talking to him the Faster began to get bored. So he said to the old man, 'Pray for me, Abba, for I want to go.' The old man said to him, 'Why?' The other replied, 'Because my heart is as if it were on fire and I do not know what is the matter with it. For truly, when I was in the village and I fasted until the evening, nothing like this happened to me.' The old man said, 'In the village you fed yourself through your ears. But go away and from now on eat at the ninth hour and whatever you do, do it secretly.' As soon as he had begun to act on this advice, the Faster found it difficult to wait until the ninth hour. And those who knew him said, 'The Faster is possessed by the devil.' So he went to tell all this to the old man who said to him, 'This way is according to God.'

ZACHARIAS

Zacharias was the son of Abba Carion who brought him up in the desert of Scetis. The story of his youth is told under 'Carion'. Macarius and Moses consulted the boy and his wisdom was recognised also by Poemen. He seems to have died young.

1. Abba Macarius said to Abba Zacharias, 'Tell me, what is the work of a monk?' He said to him, 'How is it that you are asking me, Father?' Abba Macarius said, 'Zacharias, my child, you inspire me with confidence. It is God who urges me to ask you.' Then Zacharias said to him, 'Father, in my opinion, he is a monk who does violence to himself in everything.'
2. Going to draw water one day, Abba Moses found Abba Zacharias praying beside the well and the spirit of God rested above him.
3. One day Abba Moses said to brother Zacharias, 'Tell me what I ought to do?' At these words the latter threw himself on the ground at the old man's feet and said, 'Are you asking me, Father?' The old man said to him, 'Believe me, Zacharias, my son, I have seen the Holy Spirit descending upon you and since then I am constrained to ask you.' Then Zacharias drew his hood off his head put it under his feet and trampled on it, saying, 'The man who does not let himself be treated thus, cannot become a monk.'
4. While he was sitting one day in Scetis, Abba Zacharias had a vision. He went to tell his father, Carion, about it. The old man, who was an ascetic, did not understand this matter. He got up and beat him soundly, saying that it came from the demons. But Zacharias went on thinking about it, and he went by night to Abba Poemen, to tell the matter to him and how his heart burned within him. Then the old man, seeing that this came from God, said to him, 'Go to such and such an old man and whatever he tells you to do, do it.' Zachary went to the old man and even before he could ask anything, he forestalled him, telling him everything that had happened and saying that this vision came from God. 'But go,' he said, 'and submit yourself to your father.'
5. Abba Poemen said that Abba Moses asked Abba Zacharias, who was at the point of death, 'What do you see?' He said, 'Is it not better to hold my peace Father?' And he said, 'Yes, it is better to hold your peace, my child.' At the hour of his death, Abba Isidore who was sitting there looked towards heaven and said, 'Rejoice, Zacharias, my son, because the doors of the kingdom of heaven are opened to you.'

ETA

ISAIAH

1. Abba Isaiah said, 'Nothing is so useful to the beginner as insults. The beginner who bears insults is like a tree that is watered every day.'
2. He also said to those who were making a good beginning by putting themselves under the direction of the holy Fathers, 'As with purple dye, the first colouring is never lost.' And, 'Just as young shoots are easily trained back and bent, so it is with beginners who live in submission.'
3. He also said, 'A beginner who goes from one monastery to another is like an animal who jumps this way and that, for fear of the halter.'
4. He also said that when there was an agape and the brethren were eating in the church and talking to one another, the priest of Pelusiam reprimanded them in these words, 'Brethren, be quiet. For I have seen a brother eating with you and drinking as many cups as you and his prayer is ascending to the presence of God like fire.'
5. It was said of Abba Isaiah that one day he took a branch and went to the threshing-floor to thresh and said to the owner, 'Give me some wheat.' The latter replied, 'Have you brought in the harvest, Father?' He said, 'No.' The owner said to him, 'How then can you expect to be given wheat, if you have not harvested?' Then the old man said to him, 'So then, if someone does not work, he does not receive wages?' The owner replied, 'No.' At that, the old man went away. Seeing what he had done, the brethren bowed before him, asking him to tell them why he had acted thus. The old man said to them, 'I did this as an example: whoever has not worked will not receive a reward from God.'
6. The same Abba Isaiah called one of the brethren, washed his feet, put a handful of lentils into the pot and brought them to him as soon as they had boiled. The brother said to him, 'They are not cooked, Abba.' The old man replied, 'Is it not enough simply to have seen the fire? That alone is a great consolation.'
7. He also said, 'When God wishes to take pity on a soul and it rebels,

not bearing anything and doing its own will, he then allows it to suffer that which it does not want, in order that it may seek him again.'

8. He also said, 'When someone wishes to render evil for evil, he can injure his brother's soul even by a single nod of the head.'

9. The same Abba Isaiah, when someone asked him what avarice was, replied, 'Not to believe that God cares for you, to despair of the promises of God and to love boasting.'

10. He was also asked what calumny is and he replied, 'It is ignorance of the glory of God, and hatred of one's neighbour.'

11. He was also asked what anger is and he replied, 'Quarrelling, lying and ignorance.'

ELIAS

1. Abba Elias said, 'For my part: I fear three things: the moment when my soul will leave my body, and when I shall appear before God, and when the sentence will be given against me.'

2. The old men said of Abba Agathon to Abba Elias, in Egypt, 'He is a good abba.' The old man answered them, 'In comparison with his own generation, he is good.' They said to him, 'And what is he in comparison with the ancients?' He gave them this answer, 'I have said to you that in comparison with his generation he is good but as to that of the ancients, in Scetis I have seen a man who, like Joshua the son of Nun could make the sun stand still in the heavens.' At these words they were astounded and gave glory to God.

3. Abba Elias, the minister, said, 'What can sin do where there is penitence? and of what use is love where there is pride?

4. Abba Elias said, 'I saw someone who was carrying a skin of wine on his arm, and, in order to make the demons blush, for it was a fantasy, I said to the brother, "Of your charity take off your cloak." He took off his cloak, and was not found to be carrying anything. I say that so that you may not believe even that which you see or hear. Even more, observe your thoughts, and beware of what you have in your heart and your spirit, knowing that the demons put ideas into you so as to corrupt your soul by making it think of that which is not right, in order to turn your spirit from the consideration of your sins and of God.'

5. He also said, 'Men turn their minds either to their sins, or to Jesus, or to men.'

6. He also said, 'If the spirit does not sing with the body, labour is in vain. Whoever loves tribulation will obtain joy and peace later on.'

7. He also said, 'An old man was living in a temple and the demons came to say to him, "Leave this place which belongs to us," and the old man said, "No place belongs to you." Then they began to scatter his palm leaves about, one by one, and the old man went on gathering them together with perseverance. A little later the devil took his hand and pulled him to the door. When the old man reached the door, he seized the lintel with the other hand crying out, "Jesus, save me." Immediately the devil fled away. Then the old man began to weep. Then the Lord said to him, "Why are you weeping?" and the old man said, "Because the devils have dared to seize a man and treat him like this." The Lord said to him, "You had been careless. As soon as you turned to me again, you see I was beside you." I say this, because it is necessary to take great pains, and anyone who does not do so, cannot come to his God. For he himself was crucified for our sake.'

8. A brother who followed the life of stillness in the monastery of the cave of Abba Saba came to Abba Elias and said to him, 'Abba, give me a way of life.' The old man said to the brother, 'In the days of our predecessors they took great care about these three virtues: poverty, obedience and fasting. But among monks nowadays avarice, self-confidence and great greed have taken charge. Choose whichever you want most.'

HERACLIDES

1. A brother who was attacked by the devil unburdened himself to Abba Heraclides. He told him the following in order to comfort him: 'An old man had a disciple who for many years had obeyed him in everything. Now one day when he was attacked by the devil, he made a prostration before the old man, saying, "Let me become a monk on my own." The old man replied, "Survey the district and we will build a cell for you." So they found a place a mile away. They went there and built the cell. The old man said to the brother, "What I tell you to do, do it. Each time you are afflicted, eat, drink, sleep; only do not come out of your cell until Saturday; then come to see me." The brother spent two days according to these orders, but the third day, a prey to *accidie*, he said to himself, "Why did the old man arrange that for me?" Standing up, he sang many psalms, and after sunset he ate, then went to lie down on his mat to sleep. But he saw an Ethiopian lying there who gnashed his teeth at him. Driven by great fear, he ran to the old man, knocked on his door and said, "Abba, have pity on me, open the

door." The old man, seeing he had not obeyed his instructions did not open it till morning, very early; then he opened it, and found him outside imploring him to help him. Then, full of pity, he made him come inside. The other said, "Father, I need you; on my bed I saw a black Ethiopian, as I was going to sleep." The old man replied, "You suffered that because you did not keep to my instructions." Then, according to his capacity, he taught him the discipline of the solitary life, and in a short time he became a good monk.'

THETA

THEODORE of PHERME

Theodore was trained as a monk in Scetis, probably by Macarius the Great. He was an educated man, and was ordained deacon, though he refused through humility to exercise this office. After the first devastation of Scetis he went to Pherme, which Palladius describes as 'a mountain in Egypt . . . which borders on the great desert of Scetis'.

1. Abba Theodore of Pherme had acquired three good books. He came to Abba Macarius and said to him, 'I have three excellent books from which I derive profit; the brethren also make use of them and derive profit from them. Tell me what I ought to do: keep them for my use and that of the brethren, or sell them and give the money to the poor?' The old man answered him in this way, 'Your actions are good; but it is best of all to possess nothing.' Hearing that, he went and sold his books and gave the money for them to the poor.
2. A brother lived in the Cells and in his solitude he was troubled. He went to tell Abba Theodore of Pherme about it. The old man said to him, 'Go, be more humble in your aspirations, place yourself under obedience and live with others.' Later, he came back to the old man and said, 'I do not find any peace with others.' The old man said to him, 'If you are not at peace either alone or with others, why have you become a monk? Is it not to suffer trials? Tell me how many years you have worn the habit?' He replied, 'For eight years.' Then the old man said to him, 'I have worn the habit seventy years and on no day have I found peace. Do you expect to obtain peace in eight years?' At these words the brother went away strengthened.
3. A brother came to Abba Theodore and spent three days begging him to say a word to him without getting any reply. So he went away grieved. Then the old man's disciple said to him, 'Abba, why did you not say a word to him? See, he has gone away grieved.' The old man said to him, 'I did not speak to him, for he is a trafficker who seeks to glorify himself through the words of others.'
4. He also said, 'If you are friendly with someone who happens to fall into

the temptation of fornication, offer him your hand, if you can, and deliver him from it. But if he falls into heresy and you cannot persuade him to turn from it, separate yourself quickly from him, in case, if you delay, you too may be dragged down with him into the pit.

5. It was said of Abba Theodore of Pherme that the three things he held to be fundamental were: poverty, asceticism, flight from men.

6. One day Abba Theodore was entertaining himself with the brethren. While they were eating, they drank their cups with respect, but in silence, without even saying 'pardon'. So Abba Theodore said, 'The monks have lost their manners and do not say, "pardon".'

7. A brother questioned him saying, 'Abba, would you approve of my not eating bread for several days?' The old man said to him, 'You do well, and I have done the same.' The brother said, 'I mean to take my chick-peas to the bakery, and have them made into flour.' The old man replied, 'If you are going to the bakery, why not make the flour into bread? What need is there to go out twice?'

8. One of the old men came to Abba Theodore and said to him, 'Look how such and such a brother has returned to the world.' The old man said to him, 'Does that surprise you? No, rather be astonished when you hear that someone has been able to escape the jaws of the enemy.'

9. A brother came to Abba Theodore and began to converse with him about things which he had never yet put into practice. So the old man said to him, 'You have not yet found a ship nor put your cargo aboard it and before you have sailed, you have already arrived at the city. Do the work first; then you will have the speed you are making now.'

10. The same abba came one day to see Abba John, a eunuch from birth, and during their conversation he said to him, 'When I was at Scetis, the works of the soul were our work, and we considered manual work to be subordinate; now the work of the soul has become subordinate and what was secondary is the chief work.'

11. A brother questioned him saying, 'What is the work of the soul which we now consider to be subordinate, and what is that which was subordinate and which we now consider to be our chief work?' The old man said, 'Everything you do as a commandment of God is the work of the soul; but to work and to gather goods together for a personal motive ought to be held as subordinate.' Then the brother said, 'Explain this matter to me.' So the old man said, 'Suppose you hear it said that I am ill and you ought to visit me; you say to yourself, "Shall I leave my work and go now? I had

better finish my work and then go." Then another idea comes along and perhaps you never go; or again, another brother says to you, "lend me a hand, brother"; and you say, "Shall I leave my own work and go and work with him?" If you do not go, you are disregarding the commandment of God which is the work of the soul, and doing the work of your hands which is subordinate.'

12. Abba Theodore of Pherme said, 'The man who remains standing when he repents, has not kept the commandment.'

13. He also said, 'There is no other virtue than that of not being scornful.'

14. He also said, 'The man who has learnt the sweetness of the cell flees from his neighbour but not as though he despised him.'

15. He also said, 'If I do not cut myself off from these feelings of compassion, they will not let me be a monk.'

16. He also said, 'In these days many take their rest before God gives it them.'

17. He also said, 'Do not sleep in a place where there is a woman.'

18. A brother said to Abba Theodore, 'I wish to fulfil the commandments.'

The old man told him that Abba Theonas had said to him, 'I want to fill my spirit with God.' Taking some flour to the bakery, he had made loaves which he gave to the poor who asked him for them; others asked for more, and he gave them the baskets, then the cloak he was wearing, and he came back to his cell with his loins girded with his cape. Afterwards he took himself to task telling himself that he had still not fulfilled the commandment of God.'

19. Once when Abba Joseph was ill, he sent someone to say to Abba Theodore, 'Come here, that I may see you before I leave the body.' It was the middle of the week and he did not go, but sent to say to him, 'If you wait until Saturday, I shall come; but if you depart, we shall see one another in the world to come.'

20. A brother said to Abba Theodore, 'Speak a word to me, for I am perishing,' and sorrowfully he said to him, 'I am myself in danger, so what can I say to you?'

21. A brother came to see Abba Theodore to learn weaving from him. He took a rope with him. The old man said to him, 'Go, and come back early tomorrow.' Getting up, the old man steeped the rope and prepared what was necessary, saying, 'Work in such and such a way,' and he left him. Then he went back to his cell and sat down. When the time came he

gave the brother something to eat and sent him away. The brother returned in the small hours and the old man said to him, 'Pick up your rope and take it away, for you have come to cast me into temptation and trouble'. So he did not let him come in any more.

22. Abba Theodore's disciple said, 'Someone came today to sell some onions and he filled a basin with them for me. The old man said, 'Fill one with wheat and give it to him.' There were two heaps of wheat, one of good wheat, the other of unsorted wheat. I filled him a basin of the unsorted wheat. Then the old man looked at me with anger and sorrow, and from fear, I fell down on the ground and broke the basin. When I made a prostration before him the old man said, 'Get up, it is not your fault but mine, because of what I said to you.' Then he went and filled his lap with good wheat and gave it to the tradesman with the onions.

23. One day Abba Theodore went to draw water with a brother. The brother going ahead, saw a dragon in the lake. The old man said to him, 'Go, and walk on his head.' But he was afraid and did not go. So the old man went. The beast saw him and fled away into the desert, as if it was ashamed.

24. Abba Theodore was asked, 'If there was a sudden catastrophe, would you be frightened, abba?' The old man replied, 'Even if the heavens and the earth were to collide, Theodore would not be frightened.' He had prayed God to take away fear from him and it was because of this that he was questioned.

25. It was said about him that, though he was made a deacon at Scetis, he refused to exercise the office and fled to many places from it. Each time the old men brought him back to Scetis, saying, 'Do not leave your diaconate.' Abba Theodore said to them, 'Let me pray God that he may tell me for certain whether I ought to take my part in the liturgy.' Then he prayed God in this manner, 'If it is your will that I should stand in this place, make me certain of it.' Then appeared to him a column of fire, reaching from earth to heaven, and a voice said to him, 'If you can become like this pillar, go, be a deacon.' On hearing this he decided never to accept the office. When he went to church the brethren bowed before him saying, 'If you do not wish to be deacon, at least hold the chalice.' But he refused, saying, 'If you do not leave me alone, I shall leave this place.' So they left him in peace.

26. It was said of him, that when Scetis was laid waste, he went to live in Pherme. When he grew old he was ill. So he was brought food. Whatever the first one brought him, he gave to the second, and so on; what he received

from the first, he offered to the next. When the time to eat came, he ate what the one who came then brought him.

27. It was said of Abba Theodore that when he settled down at Scetis, a demon came to him wanting to enter his cell, but he bound him to the outside of his cell. Once more another demon tried to enter, and he bound him too. A third demon came as well, and finding the other two bound, said to them, 'Why are you standing outside like this?' They said to him, 'He is sitting inside, and will not let us enter.' So the demon tried to enter by force. The old man bound him too. Fearing the prayers of the old man, they begged him, saying, 'Let us go,' and the old man said to them, 'Go away.' Then they went off covered with confusion.

28. One of the Fathers told this about Abba Theodore of Pherme: 'One evening I came to him and found him wearing a torn habit, his chest bare and his cowl hanging in front of it. Now it happened that a great man came to see him. When he had knocked, the old man went to open the door, and having met him, sat down at the door to talk with him. Then I took one side of his cape and covered his shoulders with it. But the old man put out his hand and snatched it off. When the great man had gone, I said to him, 'Abba, why did you do that? This man came to be edified, perhaps he will be shocked.' Then the old man said to me, 'What do you mean, abba? Are we still the slaves of men? We did what was necessary, the rest is superfluous. He who wishes to be edified, let him be edified; he who wishes to be shocked, let him be shocked; as for me, I meet people as they find me.' Then he said to his disciple, 'If someone comes to see me, do not say anything out of human respect, but if I am eating, say to him, "He is eating"; and if I am sleeping, say to him, "He is sleeping".'

29. Three thieves came to him one day and while the first two held him, the third took away his property. When he had taken the books, he wanted to take the habit as well. So he said to them, 'Leave that.' But they did not agree. So, fighting with his hands he pushed them both away. Seeing this, they were very frightened. Then the old man said to them, 'Do not fear; divide these things into four parts: take three and leave me one.' So they did this and in his part he got the habit which he used for the *synaxis*.

THEODORE of ENATON

Theodore of Enaton was a companion of Abba Or and a disciple of Abba Amoun. He went to Enaton in 308, a monastery nine miles west of Alexandria. By the end of the fourth century it was the leading monastery

in Egypt under its vigorous abbot, Longinus. Theodore was still alive in 364.

1. Abba Theodore of Enaton said, 'When I was young, I lived in the desert. One day I went to the bakery to make two loaves, and there I found a brother also wanting to make bread, but there was no-one to help him. So I put mine on one side, to lend him a hand. When the work was done, another brother came, and again I lent him a hand in cooking his food. Then a third came, and I did the same; and similarly one after the other, I baked for each of those who came. I made six batches. Later I made my own two loaves, since no-one else came.'
2. It was said of Abba Theodore and Abba Lucius of Enaton that they spent fifty years mocking their temptations by saying, 'After this winter, we will leave here.' When the summer came, they said, 'After this summer, we will go away from here.' They passed all their lives in this way, these Fathers whose memory we should always preserve.
3. Abba Theodore of Enaton said, 'If God reproaches us for carelessness in our prayers and infidelities in our psalmody, we cannot be saved.'

THEODORE of SCETIS

1. Abba Theodore of Scetis said, 'A thought comes to me which troubles me and does not leave me free; but not being able to lead me to act, it simply stops me progressing in virtue; but a vigilant man would cut it off and get up to pray.'

THEODORE of ELEUTHEROPOLIS

1. Abba Abraham of Iberia asked Abba Theodore of Eleutheropolis, 'Father, which is right? Ought I to seek glory for myself, or ignominy?' The old man said, 'As far as I am concerned, I prefer to seek glory rather than ignominy. If I do something good, and praise myself for it, I can condemn my thoughts by saying to myself that I do not deserve the praise; but ignominy comes from evil deeds. How then can I appease my conscience if men have been shocked because of me? It is better, therefore, to do good and praise oneself for it.' Abba Abraham said, 'Father, you have spoken well.'
2. Abba Theodore said, 'Privation of food mortifies the body of the monk.' Another old man said, 'Vigils mortify it still more.'
3. Abba Theodore also said, 'If you are temperate, do not judge the

fornicator, for you would then transgress the law just as much. And he who said, "Do not commit fornication", also said, "Do not judge".³

³ is from J.-C. Guy's Text (p. 22).

THEONAS

1. Abba Theonas said, 'When we turn our spirit from the contemplation of God, we become the slaves of carnal passions.'

THEOPHILUS the ARCHBISHOP

Theophilus, Archbishop of Alexandria, was much opposed to Origenism and expelled those who held with Origen's teaching from Nitria and Cellia. His quarrel with the Four Tall Brethren was particularly fierce. He was however reconciled with the monks before his death in A.D. 412. The ambiguity of his relationship with the marks is mirrored in these sayings attributed to him.

1. One day blessed Theophilus the archbishop came to the mountain of Nitria and the abba of the mountain came to meet him. The archbishop said to him, 'Father, in this way of life which you follow, what do you find to be best?' The old man said to him, 'The act of accusing myself, and of constantly reproaching myself to myself.' Abba Theophilus said to him, 'There is no other way but this.'
2. The same Abba Theophilus, the archbishop, came to Scetis one day. The brethren who were assembled said to Abba Pambo, 'Say something to the archbishop, so that he may be edified.' The old man said to them, 'If he is not edified by my silence, he will not be edified by my speech.'
3. Theophilus the archbishop summoned some Fathers to go to Alexandria one day, to pray and to destroy the heathen temples there. As they were eating with him, they were brought some veal for food and they ate it without realising what it was. The bishop, taking a piece of meat, offered it to the old man beside him, saying, 'Here is a nice piece of meat, abba, eat it.' But he replied, 'Till this moment, we believed we were eating vegetables, but if it is meat, we do not eat it.' None of them tasted any more of the meat which was brought.
4. The same Abba Theophilus said, 'What fear, what trembling, what uneasiness will there be for us when our soul is separated from the body. Then indeed the force and strength of the adverse powers come against us,

the rulers of darkness, those who command the world of evil, the principalities, the powers, the spirits of evil. They accuse our souls as in a lawsuit, bringing before it all the sins it has committed, whether deliberately or through ignorance, from its youth until the time when it has been taken away. So they stand accusing it of all it has done. Furthermore, what anxiety do you suppose the soul will have at that hour, until sentence is pronounced and it gains its liberty. That is its hour of affliction, until it sees what will happen to it. On the other hand, the divine powers stand on the opposite side, and they present the good deeds of the soul. Consider the fear and trembling of the soul standing between them until in judgement it receives the sentence of the righteous judge. If it is judged worthy, the demons will receive their punishment, and it will be carried away by the angels. Then thereafter you will be without disquiet, or rather you will live according to that which is written: "Even as the habitation of those who rejoice is in you." (Ps. 87.7.) Then will the Scripture be fulfilled: "Sorrow and sighing shall flee away." (Isaiah 35.10)

"Then your liberated soul will go on to that joy and ineffable glory in which it will be established. But if it is found to have lived carelessly, it will hear that terrible voice: "Take away the ungodly, that he may not see the glory of the Lord." (cf. Isaiah 26.10) Then the day of anger, the day of affliction, the day of darkness and shadow seizes upon it. Abandoned to outer darkness and condemned to everlasting fire it will be punished through the ages without end. Where then is the vanity of the world? Where is vain glory? Where is carnal life? Where is enjoyment? Where is imagination? Where is ease? Where is boasting? Riches? Nobility? Father, mother, brother? Who could take the soul out of its pains when it is burning in the fire, and remove it from bitter torments?

Since this is so, in what manner ought we not to give ourselves to holy and devout works? What love ought we to acquire? What manner of life? What virtues? What speed? What diligence? What prayer? What prudence? Scripture says: "In this waiting, let us make every effort to be found blameless and without reproach in peace.") (cf. I Cor. 1.7-8) In this way, we shall be worthy to hear it said: "Come, O blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." (Matt. 25.34) Amen.

5. The same Abba Theophilus the archbishop, at the point of death, said, 'You are blessed, Abba Arsenius, because you have always had this hour in mind.'

THEODORA

Theodora was one of the great women ascetics of the desert. Palladius mentions a Theodora 'the wife of the tribune who reached such a depth of poverty that she became a recipient of alms and finally died in the monastery of Hesychas near the sea'. She consulted Archbishop Theophilus and appears as a woman consulted by many monks about monastic life.

1. Amma Theodora asked Archbishop Theophilus about some words of the apostle saying, 'What does this mean, "Knowing how to profit by circumstances"?' (Col. 4, 5) He said to her, 'This saying shews us how to profit at all times. For example; is it a time of excess for you? By humility and patience buy up the time of excess, and draw profit from it. Is it the time of shame? Buy it up by means of resignation and win it. So everything that goes against us can, if we wish, become profitable to us.'
2. Amma Theodora said, 'Let us strive to enter by the narrow gate. Just as the trees, if they have not stood before the winter's storms cannot bear fruit, so it is with us; this present age is a storm and it is only through many trials and temptations that we can obtain an inheritance in the kingdom of heaven.'
3. She also said, 'It is good to live in peace, for the wise man practises perpetual prayer. It is truly a great thing for a virgin or a monk to live in peace, especially for the younger ones. However, you should realize that as soon as you intend to live in peace, at once evil comes and weighs down your soul through accidie, faintheartedness, and evil thoughts. It also attacks your body through sickness, debility, weakening of the knees, and all the members. It dissipates the strength of soul and body, so that one believes one is ill and no longer able to pray. But if we are vigilant, all these temptations fall away. There was, in fact a monk who was seized by cold and fever every time he began to pray, and he suffered from headaches, too. In this condition, he said to himself, "I am ill, and near to death; so now I will get up before I die and pray." By reasoning in this way, he did violence to himself and prayed. When he had finished, the fever abated also. So, by reasoning in this way, the brother resisted, and prayed and was able to conquer his thoughts.'
4. The same Amma Theodora said, 'A devout man happened to be insulted by someone, and he said to him, "I could say as much to you, but the commandment of God keeps my mouth shut." ' Again she said this, 'A Christian discussing the body with a Manichean expressed himself in

these words, 'Give the body discipline and you will see that the body is for him who made it.'

5. The same amma said that a teacher ought to be a stranger to the desire for domination, vain-glory, and pride; one should not be able to fool him by flattery, nor blind him by gifts, nor conquer him by the stomach, nor dominate him by anger; but he should be patient, gentle and humble as far as possible; he must be tested and without partisanship, full of concern, and a lover of souls.

6. She also said that neither asceticism, nor vigils nor any kind of suffering are able to save, only true humility can do that. There was an anchorite who was able to banish the demons; and he asked them, 'What makes you go away? Is it fasting?' They replied, 'We do not eat or drink.' 'Is it vigils?' They replied, 'We do not sleep.' 'Is it separation from the world?' 'We live in the deserts.' 'What power sends you away then?' They said, 'Nothing can overcome us, but only humility.' 'Do you see how humility is victorious over the demons?'

7. Amma Theodora also said, 'There was a monk, who, because of the great number of his temptations said, "I will go away from here." As he was putting on his sandals, he saw another man who was also putting on his sandals and this other monk said to him, "Is it on my account that you are going away? Because I go before you wherever you are going."

8. The same amma was asked about the conversations one hears; 'If one is habitually listening to secular speech, how can one yet live for God alone, as you suggest?' She said, 'Just as when you are sitting at table and there are many courses, you take some but without pleasure, so when secular conversations come your way, have your heart turned towards God, and thanks to this disposition, you will hear them without pleasure, and they will not do you any harm.'

9. Another monk suffered bodily irritation and was infested with vermin. Now originally he had been rich. So the demons said to him, 'How can you bear to live like this, covered with vermin?' But this monk, because of the greatness of his soul, was victorious over them.

10. Another of the old men questioned Amma Theodore saying, 'At the resurrection of the dead, how shall we rise?' She said, 'As pledge, example, and as prototype we have him who died for us and is risen, Christ our God.'

8-10 are additions from J.-C. Guy's text (p. 23).

IOTA

JOHN the DWARF

John the Dwarf, son of poor parents in Tese, was born about 339. The second story here clearly belongs to his youth at home before he became a monk, while he was living with his family. At the age of 18 he went to Scetis and was trained by Abba Amoe for twelve years. One of the most vivid characters in the desert, he attracted many disciples and in order to preserve his own solitude he dug himself a cave underground. He was ordained priest, and the number of his sayings, recorded and preserved, points to his importance among his disciples. After 407 he went to Suez and the Mountain of Anthony.

1. It was said of Abba John the Dwarf that he withdrew and lived in the desert at Scetis with an old man of Thebes. His abba, taking a piece of dry wood, planted it and said to him, 'Water it every day with a bottle of water, until it bears fruit.' Now the water was so far away that he had to leave in the evening and return the following morning. At the end of three years the wood came to life and bore fruit. Then the old man took some of the fruit and carried it to the church saying to the brethren, 'Take and eat the fruit of obedience.'

2. It was said of Abba John the Dwarf, that one day he said to his elder brother, 'I should like to be free of all care, like the angels, who do not work, but ceaselessly offer worship to God.' So he took off his cloak and went away into the desert. After a week he came back to his brother. When he knocked on the door, he heard his brother say, before he opened it 'Who are you?' He said, 'I am John, your brother.' But he replied, 'John has become an angel, and henceforth he is no longer among men.' Then the other begged him saying, 'It is I.' However, his brother did not let him in, but left him there in distress until morning. Then, opening the door, he said to him, 'You are a man and you must once again work in order to eat.' Then John made a prostration before him, saying, 'Forgive me.'

3. Abba John the Dwarf said, 'If a king wanted to take possession of his enemy's city, he would begin by cutting off the water and the food and so